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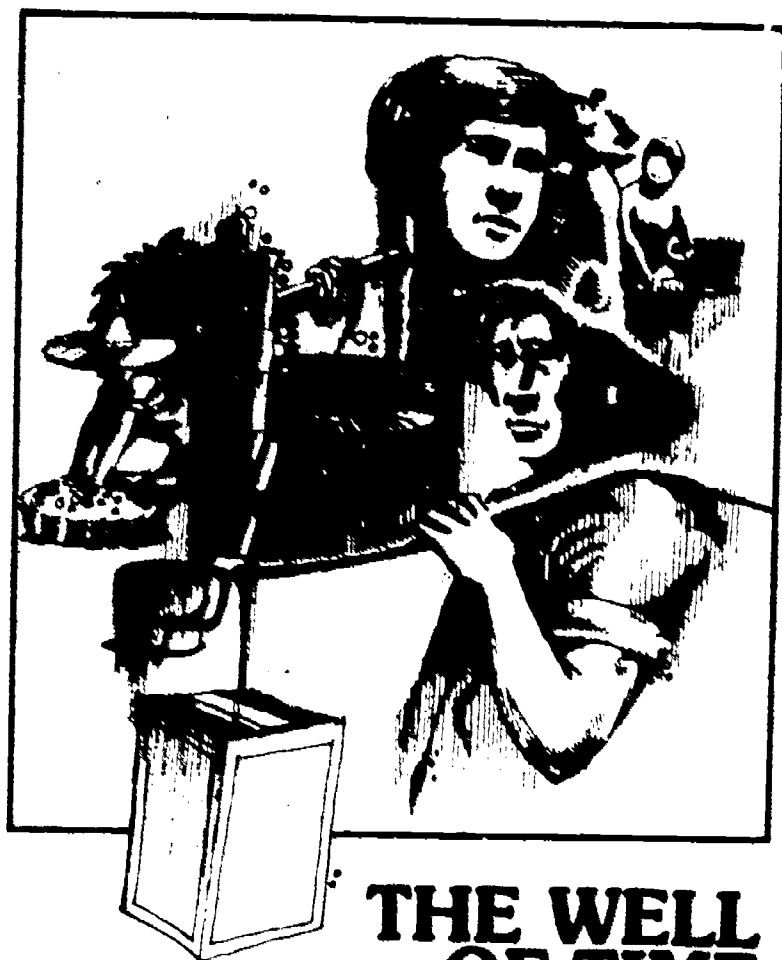
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ABSTRACT

A collection of eighteen short stories by Filipino writers is presented. The selections represent a variety of images of Filipino culture, both urban and rural, and life styles in northern and southern Philippines. The aim of the anthology is that the student will learn to empathize with experience rendered in language, appreciate the Filipino writer's art and craft, and understand the short story as a literary form. These stories are intended to be taught in grades 9-12 in a bilingual education setting. The book is divided into four sections: (1) Home and Country, (2) Of Identity and Family, (3) A Sense of History, and (4) Of Change and Values. Stories by the following authors are included: Narciso G. Reyes, Carlos Bulosan, Bienvenido N. Santos, N.V.M. Gonzales, Manuel E. Arguilla, Aida Rivera Ford, Roman A. de la Cruz, Rogelio R. Sikat, J. Eddie Infante, Nick Joaquin, J. C. Dionisio, Gilda Cordero-Fernando, E. P. Patanne, Andres Cristobal Cruz, Arturo B. Rotor, Amador T. Daguiso, J. C. Tuvera, and Gregorio C. Brillantes. (AMH)

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THE WELL OF TIME

Eighteen Short Stories
from Philippine Contemporary Literature

Compiled by Teresito M. Laygo

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PREFACE

Water is a principal source of life. It is a primary life-giving substance which is vital to the existence of generations of people. Water, like the heart of a man, pumps life to every living creature on earth.

The well is a source of water. It is usually found in the most central areas of a specific town or barrio. In most cases, it is the center of activities of a given community. It is a place where people gather, some of them to fetch water for drinking, cooking, washing, bathing, and for any number of other uses. It is a place where people chat, make fun and discuss the most pressing issues in the community. It is a place for collective work . . . collective experiences, . . . that brings people, young or old, together.

There are wells that have withstood the test of time. They have never dried up. They have been a basic source of peoples' needs, generation after generation. In most cases, they have been monuments to the history of a people. They have served the past, are utilized in the present, and will probably still be a resource in the future. It is with these thoughts in mind that we picked *The Well of Time* as the title of this anthology.

As a source of Filipino cultural heritage, *The Well of Time* is in the form of a collection of eighteen (18) short stories. These stories have a time frame of their own. They are stories by several generations of Filipino writers. As writing, the stories have withstood the test of time. They have been read in the past and continue to be read in the present. And the writers of these stories offer a variety of images of Filipino culture: urban and rural, life-styles in northern and in southern Philippines as well. This variety in both subject and method allows the reader to adequately sample the experience of the Filipino people now over forty million.

The stories in *The Well of Time* are intended to be taught to students in the ninth through twelfth grades. A teacher's

handbook to accompany the anthology is available. It begins with a set of questionnaires which may serve the purpose of both teacher and student. The compiler believes that it is worthwhile for the teacher to attempt a self-assessment, so that he can obtain the most from reading and teaching the short stories here.

The questionnaires are followed by "In the Workshop of Time and Tide," a brief introduction to the Filipino storyteller's art in general and the Philippine short story in particular. This section would give the teacher a wider and richer background for teaching the stories in the anthology.

In "The Brother, The Grandfather, and the Maid: Three Readings," N.V.M. Gonzalez explicates three of these stories. His analyses are models of what a teacher can do to help the student discover through studying the subtleties of fiction; at the same time, various necessary attitudes toward the components of the craft are provided and argued. Even in handbooks on writing, literary modes and techniques are seldom so illuminatingly explained.

The handbook also includes a study guide for each story in the anthology which would help the teacher arrive at his own comprehension of the stories, define this to a considerable degree, and facilitate class discussions.

The four cultural or experiential categories articulate the stories in *The Well of Time* with the theme of the Filipino's search for unity in diversity. These categories are: I. Home and the Native Country; II. Of Identity and Family; III. A Sense of History; and IV. Of Change and Values. The sequence of presentation, however, is not binding on the teacher.

The compiler hopes that, through this anthology, the student will learn to empathize with experience rendered in language, appreciate the Filipino writers' art and craft, and understand the uniquely universal form called the short story. From the discipline of deriving meaning from literary experience, a reader may also be able to impose a similar order on his own life.

I. Home and Country

Native Land

Narciso G. Reyes

Why Had I Left Home?

Carlos Bulosan

Scent of Apples

Bienvenido N. Santos

The Tomato Game

N.V.M. Gonzalez

Narciso G. Reyes

Native Land

The train left amidst confused noises. Shouts of boys selling newspapers and magazines. *Mabuhay, ma'am, Mabuhay Extra. Hera-a-a-Id, sir. Foto News, Foto News, anyone?* Clamour of leave-takings and last-minute reminders. Don't forget, Sindo, you are to alight at Sta. Isabel, watch the stations. Temlong, don't ever let that bag out of your hands, there are thieves everywhere, be careful. Give Ka Uweng my regards, Sela, tell him we'll go home for the Holy Week. Your pass, Kiko, it might be mislaid. Happy trip, Mrs. Enriquez. Smile just once, Ben, I won't stay there long and I'll write every day. Remember me to the folks. Goodbye. Goodbye. 'Till we meet again. Sudden and sharp hiss of the engine. Clanking of the jolted cars. A long whistle and the uncertain chug, chug, of the pistons. The train throbbed into life and slowly began to move. H-s-s-ssss. Chug, chug, chug . . .

The darkness of Tutuban receded behind Danding and his companions as they went forth into the light and the fresh air of early morning.

His Aunt Juana took a deep breath and said, "Thank God we got started at last. It was so warm inside the station." His Uncle

Gorio was already looking out of the window at the houses and trees along the tracks.

The movement of the engine was now swift and sure, like the beat of a heart no longer beset by doubt. The noise and confusion of leaving passed like a cloud from Danding's mind, and he recalled why they were going to Malawig. His Aunt Juana was speaking again. "The dead one is your Uncle Inong, a nephew of your Grandmother Asyang and cousin to your father. He was a good man."

Danding felt a touch of sadness, although he had never seen the dead kinsman. The mention of his father stirred the depths of his heart; he felt strangely drawn to the unknown dead. He remembered that his father was born in Malawig, that he grew up and spent his early youth in that small village. He turned to his Aunt Juana and asked what the village looked like, whether it was rich or poor, remote or near the town. And while the good woman probed her memory there was being formed in his mind an enticing picture of the village and his heart was filling with an eagerness he rarely felt.

* * *

At first glance, Malawig was like any other village in Central Luzon. A narrow, winding road covered with thick, yellowish dust. Rows of bamboo groves, mango, coconut and acacia trees. Nipa houses, most of them old and with sunburnt roofs and sides. Here and there, a wooden house, tall and unpainted, or a store which defied detection until one came up against it. Beyond the sparse rows of houses, glimpsed now and then, the bountiful, life-giving fields. And over all, smiling and full of the morning's splendour, the vast blue cloudless sky.

"There's nothing beautiful here except the sky," the driver of the caretela in which they were riding remarked jokingly.

Danding stifled the surge of disappointment in his heart. "No . . ." he protested softly. He was thinking that it was in such villages as Malawig that Del Pilar and other heroes of his race were born, that it was from such fields as he was now gazing upon that the spirit of the Revolution drew much of its purity and strength. The thought solaced him and gave a new aspect to all the things around him.

* * *

He had so many relatives in the village. It seemed as if his Aunt Juana would never finish introducing them to him. He is your Grandfather Tasyo and she is your Grandmother Inés. Your cousins Juan, Seling, Maria and Asias. Your Aunt Bito. Your Uncle Enteng. Bows and smiles and kissing of hands. Relatives near and distant, blood relations and in-laws, relatives old and young. All the people in the house, it seemed, were related to Danding. "It's good that my nose is naturally flat," he thought. "It would have been flattened, anyway, by the kissing of so many hands."

Because they were the only ones who had come all the way from Manila, Danding, his uncle and his aunt became the center of interest. Everyone wanted to know how they were faring in the city. Danding was deluged with questions about his sick father and his mother who was now the sole support of the family. His Aunt Juana glanced at Danding and tried to answer the insistent queries. She knew how sensitive her nephew was, knew that the tragedy of his father's illness was an ever-fresh wound in his heart. But Danding answered every question before she could say a word; he seemed eager to talk and already at ease amidst relatives whom he had come to know only now.

A thin *sawali* partition separated the sala from the room in

which the dead one lay. Through the open door, which was decorated on both sides with white curtains tied at the ends with strips of black ribbon, an endless stream of people passed: mourners and neighbors who had come to offer their condolences to the family and to pay their last respects to the dead. But the moment Danding entered the room he had a strange sensation. The silence of death seemed to envelop his whole being, drowning out all awareness of the noise around him. Slowly he approached the coffin and gazed at the dead man's face. Light-brown and comely, it was a countenance in which goodness and loyalty were written in clear, strong lines. Danding saw in the breadth of the forehead, in the eyes which were not completely closed, and in the shape of the nose a faint resemblance with his father. Pity and sorrow gripped his heart.

"You haven't greeted your Aunt Maria," his Aunt Juana reminded him softly. "And your cousin Bining," she whispered. Danding kissed the widow's hand and sat beside Bining, but he couldn't say a word; his heart was full. After a while he reached for an album on the table beside him, opened it, and meditated on the mysterious and powerful ties of blood which bound men together.

* * *

After lunch Danding went to the field in back of the house. Harvest-time was over and the palay had been stacked up in sheaves. The bare earth seemed to smoulder in the heat of the noon-day sun. Danding sat down in the shade of a bamboo grove and looked around him.

Not far off his Grandfather Tasio was whittling at a piece of bamboo. The blade of his bolo flashed like a jewel in the sun. Danding stood up and approached the old man. *Lolo* Tasio spoke first. "You are like your father," he said.

"Why, Grandfather?"

"You are ill at ease in a crowd; you prefer being alone."

"There are times when a man needs to be alone, Grandfather."

"Your father also talked that way. He spoke like an old man even when he was still quite young."

"Did you see his youth?"

"See!" *Lolo Tasio* burst out laughing. "Of course, son! It was I who cut your father's umbilical cord. I made his first toys. His father died soon after his birth."

Lolo Tasio stood up suddenly and pointed with his bolo at the other end of the field. "Your father flew his kites there when he was a little boy. Once he went plowing with me and fell off a carabao in that paddy. He was hurt then; I thought he would never stop crying."

The old man turned and looked up at the mango tree behind him. "I made your father climb up that tree one afternoon at the height of the Revolution, when I heard that some desperate Spaniards were coming our way. And there, right where you were sitting a while ago, he wrote his first poem — a brief ode to one of the girls he had met in the town. Your father had a streak of devilry in him."

Danding smiled. "Was that girl the cause of his coming to Manila?"

"Yes." *Lolo Tasio* paused as though savoring the memory of the incident. "They were caught playing beside a rice-stack."

"Playing?"

"Yes — in the light of a few flickering stars."

There were many other things *Danding* wanted to ask, but he remembered the dead one and the people in the house; they might be looking for him. Reluctantly he ended the conversation and left *Lolo Tasio* to his memories.

"What did you watch in the fields?" one of his newfound cousins asked banteringly.

"The sun," Danding answered, closing his eyes to readjust his vision to the semi-darkness which seemed to shroud the house.

* * *

The graveyard lay beside the church, a fact which recalled to Danding God's curse upon Adam and his children, and of mankind's long, tragic exile that ends only in death. He remembered, too, that in this little sanctuary of the dead reposed the dust of his ancestors, the humble remains of the collective hopes, loves, joys and sorrows, of the proud dreams and the disappointments which his family had bequeathed to him as his heritage. He stepped lightly on the soft earth and tried not to tread upon even the smallest plants.

The grave was ready. There was nothing left to do but lower the coffin and cover it up with earth. But at the last moment the dead man's face was uncovered, so that the mourners might gaze upon it once more. The silence was broken and the air filled with suppressed sobs and cries more heartrending than loud weeping. Danding bit his lips; in spite of himself he felt tears welling out of his eyes.

For a moment he was overwhelmed with grief, and by the vague feeling that he, too, was undergoing a kind of death. Troubled and full of a strange unrest, he gently withdrew and went back to the house.

He wanted to be alone. When he saw that there were still people in the house, he went to the fields instead. The sun was setting and the wind was tipped with cold. Already there was a hint of evening in the air. Danding stopped near the bamboo grove and wiped the sweat off his face.

The peace of the fields caressed his hot face like a mother's hand. He took a deep breath, sat down on the warm earth and closed his eyes. He stretched out his legs, pressed his palms upon the earth, and raised his face to the gentle wind.

How cool, how fragrant was the wind.

Slowly sorrow and agitation left him, and a feeling of repose suffused his tired body. On that small piece of earth, whereon his father was born, his heart found peace.

Stronger blew the wind, which bore the smell of earth and the fragrance of ripe grain. Danding remembered *Lolo Tasio's* stories about his father. How he flew kites in the fields, how he fell off a carabao, how he hid from the Spanish desperados, the girl beside the rice-stack — everything came back to him fraught with a new meaning. Danding laughed softly and pressed his hands deeper into the soil. Like a tree rooted there, he felt a mysterious kinship with the earth which had been wet by his father's tears and had resounded to his laughter.

At that moment Danding seemed to hold in his hand the secret of what is called love of country. He understood why exiled is a punishment so difficult to bear, and why the exiled sons will venture forth in the teeth of storm and flood just to be able to go home to their Motherland. Why Rizal and Bonifacio unhesitatingly offered up their lives for their country.

Back of the noble phrases, of the sublime sacrifices and the death of the heroes, Danding saw a bit of land upon which stood their homes, on which their families lived and which shared their secrets and served as repository of the heritage of their race. Again he smiled.

From the direction of the house he heard voices, heard his name being called. Slowly he stood up. Night had come, darkness covered the fields. There was no moon and the sky

was overcast. But Danding could still discern the tips of the bamboos in the shade of which his father's first poem had been composed, and above them the flickering stars which had witnessed his first love

Carlos Bulosan

Why Had I Left Home?

I found the dark hole of the steerage and lay on my bunk for days without food, seasick and lonely. I was restless at night and many disturbing thoughts came to my mind. Why had I left home? What would I do in America? I looked into the faces of my companions for a comforting answer, but they were as young and bewildered as I, and my only consolation was their proximity and the familiarity of their dialects. It was not until we had left Japan that I began to feel better.

One day in mid-ocean, I climbed through the narrow passageway to the deck where other steerage passengers were fishermen in the northern coastal regions of Luzon. They were talking easily and eating rice with salted fish with their bare hands, some of them were walking barefoot and unconcerned, in their homemade cotton shorts. The first-class passengers were annoyed, and an official of the boat came down and drove us back into the dark haven below. The small opening at the top of the iron ladder was shut tight, and we did not see the sun again until we had passed Hawaii.

But before we anchored at Honolulu an epidemic of meningitis spread throughout the boat and concentrated

among the steerage passengers. The Chinese waiters stopped coming into our dining room, because so many of us had been attacked by the disease. They pushed the tin plates under the door of the kitchen and ran back to their rooms, afraid of being contaminated. Those hungry enough crawled miserably on their bellies and reached for their plates.

But somewhere in the room a peasant boy was playing a guitar and another was strumming a mandolin. I lay back on my bunk listening and wishing I could join them. In the far corner of the dining room, crouched around the dining table, five young students were discussing the coming presidential election in the United States. Not far from them was a dying boy from Pangasinan.

One night when I could no longer stand the heat in the closed room, I screamed aloud and woke up most of the steerage passengers. The boy who had been playing the guitar came to my bed with cold water and rubbed my forehead and back with it. I was relieved of my discomfort a little and told him so.

"My name is Marcelo," he said. "I came from San Manuel, Pangasinan."

"San Manuel?" I said. "I used to work there — in the mango fields. I am glad to meet you."

"Go to sleep now," he said. "Call for me if you need my help."

I heard his feet pattering away from me, and I was comforted. It was enough that Marcelo had come from a familiar town. It was a bond that bound us together in our journey. And I was to discover later this same regional friendship, which developed into tribalism, obstructed all efforts toward Filipino unity in America.

There were more than two hundred of us in the steerage. A

young doctor and an assistant came now and then to check the number of deaths and to examine those about to die. It was only when we reached Hawaii that the epidemic was checked, and we were allowed to go out again. Some of the stronger passengers carried their sick relatives and friends through the narrow hatch and put them in the sunlight.

I was pleasantly sunning myself one afternoon when Marcelo rolled over on his stomach and touched me. I turned and saw a young white girl wearing a brief bathing suit walking towards us with a young man. They stopped some distance away from us; then as though the girl's moral conscience had been provoked, she put her small hand on her mouth and said in a frightened voice:

"Look at those half-naked savages from the Philippines, Roger! Haven't they any idea of decency?"

"I don't blame them for coming into the sun," the young man said. "I know how it is below."

"Roger!" said the terrified girl. "Don't tell me you have been down in that horrible place? I simply can't believe it!"

The man said something, but they had already turned and the wind carried it away. I was to hear that girl's voice in many ways afterward in the United States. It became no longer her voice, but an angry chorus shouting:

"Why don't they ship those monkeys back where they came from?"

We arrived in Seattle on a June day. My first sight of the approaching land was an exhilarating experience. Everything seemed native and promising to me. It was like coming home after a long voyage, although as yet I had no home in this city. Everything seemed familiar and kind — the white faces of the buildings melting in the soft afternoon sun, the gray contours of the surrounding valleys that seemed to vanish in the last

periphery of light. With a sudden surge of joy, I knew that I must find a home in this land.

I had only twenty cents left, not even enough to take me to Chinatown where, I had been informed, a Filipino hotel and two restaurants were located. Fortunately two oldtimers put me in a car with four others, and took us to a hotel on King Street, the heart of Filipino life in Seattle. Marcelo, who was also in the car, had a cousin named Elias who came to our room with another oldtimer. Elias and his unknown friend persuaded my companions to play a strange kind of card game. In a little while Elias got up and touched his friend suggestively; then they disappeared and we never saw them again.

It was only when our two countrymen had left that my companions realized what happened. They had taken all their money. Marcelo asked me if I had any money. I gave him my twenty cents. After collecting a few more cents from the others, he went downstairs and when he came back he told us that he had telegraphed for money to his brother in California.

All night we waited for the money to come, hungry and afraid to go out in the street. Outside we could hear shouting and singing; then a woman screamed lustily in one of the rooms down the hall. Across from our hotel a jazz band was playing noisily; it went on until dawn. But in the morning a telegram came to Marcelo which said:

YOUR BROTHER DIED AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT LAST WEEK

Marcelo looked at us and began to cry. His anguish stirred an aching fear in me. I knelt on the floor looking for my suitcase under the bed. I knew that I had to go out now — alone. I put the suitcase on my shoulder and walked toward the door, stopping for a moment to look back at my friends who were still standing silently around Marcelo. Suddenly a man came into the room

and announced that he was the proprietor.

"Well, boys," he said, looking at our suitcases, "where is the rent?"

"We have no money, sir," I said, trying to impress him with my politeness.

"That's too bad," he said quickly, glancing furtively at our suitcases again. "That is just too bad." He walked outside and went down the hall. He came back with a short, fat Filipino, who looked at us stupidly with his dull, small eyes, and spat his cigar out of the window.

"There they are, Jake," said the proprietor.

Jake looked disappointed. "They are too young," he said.

"They will be sending babies next," Jake said.

"You can break them in, can't you, Jake?" the proprietor pleaded. "This is not the first time you have broken babies in. You have done it in the sugar plantations in Hawaii, Jake!"

"Hell!" Jake said, striding across the room to the proprietor. He pulled a fat roll of bills from his pocket and gave twenty-five dollars to the proprietor. Then he turned to us and said, "All right, Pinoys, you are working for me now. Get your hats and follow me."

We are too frightened to hesitate. When we lifted our suitcases the proprietor ordered us not to touch them.

"I'll take care of them until you come back from Alaska," he said. "Good fishing, boys!"

In this way we were sold for five dollars each to work in the fish canneries in Alaska, by a Visayan from the island of Leyte to an Ilocano from the province of La Union. Both were oldtimers; both were tough. They exploited young immigrants until one of them, the hotel proprietor, was shot dead by an unknown assailant. We were forced to sign a paper which stated that each of us owed the contractor twenty dollars for bedding and

another twenty for luxuries. What the luxuries were, I have never found out. The contractor turned out to be a tall, heavy-set, dark Filipino, who came to the small hold of the boat barking at us like a dog. He was drunk and saliva was running down his shirt.

"And get this, you devils!" he shouted at us. "You will never come back alive if you don't do what I say!"

It was the beginning of my life in America, the beginning of a long flight that carried me down the years, fighting desperately to find peace in some corner of life.

I had struck up a friendship with two oldtimers who were not much older than I. One was Conrado Torres, a journalism student at a university in Oregon, who was fired with a dream to unionize the cannery workers. I discovered that he had come from Binalonan but could hardly remember the names of people there because he had been very young when he had come to America. Conrado was small and dark with slant eyes and thick eyebrows; but his nose was thin above a wise, sensuous mouth. He introduced me to Paulo Lorca, a gay fellow, who had graduated from law school in Los Angeles. The surreptitious meeting at a cannery in Rose Inlet was the beginning of a friendship that grew simultaneously with the growth of the trade union movement and progressive ideas among the Filipinos in the United States.

In those days labor unions were still unheard of in the canneries, so the contractors rapaciously exploited their workers. They had henchmen in every cannery who saw to it that every attempt at unionization was frustrated and the instigators of the idea punished. The companies also had their share in the exploitation; our bunkhouses were unfit for human habitation. The lighting system was bad and dangerous to our eyes, and those of us who were working in the semi-darkness

were severely affected by the strong ammonia from the machinery.

I was working in a section called "wash lye". Actually a certain amount of lye was diluted in the water where I washed the beheaded fish that came down on a small escalator. One afternoon a cutter above me, working in the poor light, slashed off his right arm with the cutting machine. It happened so swiftly that he did not cry out. I saw his arm floating down the water among the fish heads.

It was only at night that we felt free, although the sun seemed never to disappear from the sky. It stayed on in the western horizon and its magnificence inflamed the snows on the island, giving us a world of soft, continuous light, until the moon rose at about ten o'clock to take its place. Then, trembling shadows began to form on the rise of the brilliant snow in our yard, and we would come out with baseball bats, gloves and balls, and the Indian girls who worked in the cannery would join us, shouting huskily like men.

We played far into the night. Sometimes a Filipino and an Indian girl would run off into the moonlight; we could hear them chasing each other in the snow. Then we would hear the girl giggling and laughing deliciously in the shadows. Paulo was always running off with a girl named La Belle. How she acquired that name in Alaska, I never found out. But hardly had we started our game when off they ran, chasing each other madly and suddenly disappearing out of sight.

Toward the end of the season La Belle gave birth to a baby. We were sure, however, that the father was not in our group. We were sure that she had got it from one of the Italian fishermen on the island. La Belle did not come to work for two days, but when she appeared on the third day with the baby slung on her back, she threw water into Conrado's face.

"Are you going to marry me or not?" she asked him.

Conrado was frightened. He was familiar with the ways of Indians; so he said: "Why should I marry you?"

"We'll see about that!" La Belle shouted, running to the door. She came back with an official of the company. "That's the one!" she said, pointing to Conrado.

"You'd better come to the office with us," said the official.

Conrado did not know what to do. He looked at me for help. Paulo left his washing machine and nodded to me to follow him. We went with them into the building which was the town hall.

"You are going to marry this Indian girl and stay on the island for seven years as prescribed by law," said the official to Conrado. "And as the father of the baby, you must support both mother and child, and, if you have four more children by the time your turn is up, you will be sent back to the mainland with a bonus."

"But, sir, the baby is not mine," said Conrado weakly. Paulo stepped up quickly beside him and said: "The baby is mine, sir. I guess I'll have to stay."

La Belle looked at Paulo with surprise. After a moment, however, she began to smile with satisfaction. Paulo was well educated and spoke good English. But I think what finally drove Conrado from La Belle's primitive mind were Paulo's curly hair, his even, white teeth. Meekly she signed the paper after Paulo.

"I'll stay here for seven years, all right," Paulo said to me.

"I'm in a mess in Los Angeles anyway — so I'll stay with this dirty Indian girl."

"Stop talking like that if you know what is good for you," La Belle said giving him the baby.

"I guess you are right," Paulo laughed. "I'll be in the United States before you know it."

I still do not understand why Paulo interceded for Conrado. When the season was over Paulo came to our bunks in the boat and asked Conrado to send him something to drink. I did not see him again.

* * *

When I landed in Seattle for the second time, I expected a fair amount of money from the company. But the contractor, Max Fuega, came into the play room and handed us slips of paper. I looked at mine and was amazed at the neatly itemized expenditures that I was supposed to have incurred during the season. Twenty-five dollars for withdrawals, one hundred for board and room, twenty for bedding, and another twenty for something I do not now remember. At the bottom was the actual amount I was to receive after all the deductions: thirteen dollars!

I could do nothing. I did not even go to the hotel where I had left my suitcase. I went to a Japanese dry goods store on Jackson Street and bought a pair of corduroy pants and a blue shirt. It was already twilight and the cannery workers were in the crowded Chinese gambling houses, losing their season's earnings and drinking bootleg whiskey. They became quarrelsome and abusive to their own people when they lost, and subservient to the Chinese gambling lords and marijuana peddlers. They pawed at the semi-nude whores with their dirty hands and made suggestive gestures, running out into the night when they were rebuffed for lack of money.

I was already in America, and I felt good and safe. I did not understand why. The gamblers, prostitutes and Chinese opium smokers did not excite me, but they aroused in me a feeling of fight. I knew that I must run away from them, but it was not that I was afraid of contamination. I wanted to see other aspects of American life, for surely these destitute and vicious people were

merely a small part of it. Where would I begin this pilgrimage, this search for a door into America?

I went outside and walked around looking into the faces of my countrymen, wondering if I would see someone I had known in the Philippines. I came to a building which brightly dressed white women were entering, lifting their diaphanous gowns as they climbed the stairs. I looked up and saw a huge sign:

MANILA DANCE HALL

The orchestra upstairs was playing; Filipinos were entering. I put my hands in my pockets and followed them, beginning to feel lonely for the sound of home.

The dance hall was crowded with Filipino cannery workers and domestic servants. But the girls were very few, and the Filipinos fought over them. When a boy liked a girl he bought a roll of tickets from the hawker on the floor and kept dancing with her. But the other boys who also liked the same girl shouted at him to stop, cursing him in the dialects and sometimes throwing rolled wet papers at him. At the bar the glasses were tinkling, the bottles popping loudly, and the girls in the back room were smoking marijuana. It was almost impossible to breathe.

Then I saw Marcelo's familiar back. He was dancing with a tall blonde in a green dress, a girl so tall that Marcelo looked like a dwarf climbing a tree. But the girl was pretty and her body was nicely curved and graceful, and she had a way of swaying that aroused confused sensations in me. It was evident that many of the boys wanted to dance with her; they were shouting maliciously at Marcelo. The way the blonde waved to them made me think that she knew most of them. They were nearly all oldtimers and strangers to Marcelo. They were probably gamblers and pimps, because they had fat rolls of money and expensive clothing.

But Marcelo was learning very fast. He requested one of his friends to buy another roll of tickets for him. The girl was supposed to tear off one ticket for every three minutes, but I noticed that she tore off one ticket for every minute. That was ten cents a minute. Marcelo was unaware of what she was doing; he was spending his whole season's earnings on his first day in America. It was only when one of his friends shouted to him in the dialect that he became angry at the girl. Marcelo was not tough, but his friend was an oldtimer. Marcelo pushed the girl toward the gaping bystanders. His friend opened a knife and gave it to him.

Then suddenly something happened that made my heart leap. One of the blonde girls's admirers came from behind and struck Marcelo with a piece of lead pipe. Marcelo's friend whipped out a pistol and fired. Marcelo and the boy with the lead pipe fell on the floor simultaneously, one on top of the other, but the blonde girl ran into the crowd screaming frantically. Several guns banged at once, and the lights went out. I saw Marcelo's friend crumple in the fading light.

At once the crowd seemed to flow out of the windows. I went to a side window and saw three heavy electric wires strung from the top of the building to the ground. I reached for them and slid to the ground. My palms were burning when I came out of the alley. Then I heard the sirens of police cars screaming infernally toward the place. I put my cap in my pocket and ran as fast as I could in the direction of a neon light two blocks down the street.

It was a small church where Filipino farm workers were packing their suitcases and bundles. I found out later that Filipino immigrants used their churches as rest houses while they were waiting for work. There were two large trucks outside. I went to one of them and sat on the running board, holding my hands over my heart for fear it would beat too fast. The lights in

the church went out and the workers came into the street. The driver of the truck in which I was sitting pointed a strong flashlight at me.

"Hey, you, are you looking for a job?" he asked me.

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Get in the truck," he said, jumping into the cab. "Let's go, Flo!" he shouted to the other driver.

I was still trembling with excitement. But I was glad to get out of Seattle — to anywhere else in America. I did not care where so long as it was in America. I found a corner and sat down heavily. The drivers shouted to each other. Then we were off to work.

It was already midnight and the lights in the city of Seattle were beginning to fade. I could see the reflections on the bright lake in Bremerton. I was reminded of Baguio. Then some of the men began singing. The driver and two men were arguing over money. A boy in the other truck was playing a violin. We were on the highway to Yakima Valley.

After a day and a night of driving we arrived in a little town called Moxee City. The apple trees were heavy with fruit and the branches drooped to the ground. It was late afternoon when we passed through the town; the hard light of the sun punctuated the ugliness of the buildings. I was struck dumb by its isolation and the dry air that hung oppressively over the place. The heart-shaped valley was walled by high treeless mountains, and the hot breeze that blew in from a distant sea was injurious to the apple trees.

The leader of our crew was called Cornelio Paez; but most of the oldtimers suspected that it was not his real name. There was something shifty about him, and his so-called bookkeeper, a pockmarked man we simply called Pinoy (which is a term

generally applied to all Filipino immigrant workers), had a strange trick of squinting sideways when he looked at you. There seemed to be an old animosity between Paez and his bookkeeper.

But we were drawn together because the white people of Yakima Valley were suspicious of us. Years before, in the town of Toppenish, two Filipino apple pickers had been found murdered on the road to Sunnyside. At that time, there was ruthless persecution of the Filipinos throughout the Pacific Coast, instigated by orchardists who feared the unity of white and Filipino workers. A small farmer in Wapato who had tried to protect his Filipino workers had had his house burnt. So, however much we distrusted each other under Paez, we knew that beyond the walls of our bunkhouse were our real enemies, waiting to drive us out of Yakima Valley.

I had become acquainted with an oldtimer who had considerable experience in the United States. His name was Julio, and it seemed that he was hiding from some trouble in Chicago. At night, when the men gambled in the kitchen, I would stand silently behind him and watch him cheat the other players. He was very deft, and his eyes were very sharp and trained. Sometimes when there was no game, Julio would teach me tricks.

Mr. Malraux, our employer, had three daughters who used to work with us after school hours. He was a Frenchman who had gone to Moxee City when it consisted of only a few houses. At that time the valley was still a haven for Indians, but they had been gradually driven out when farming had been started on a large scale. Malraux had married an American woman in Spokane and begun farming; the girls came one by one, helping him on the farm as they grew. When I arrived in Moxee City they were already in their teens.

The oldest girl was called Estelle; she had just finished high school. She had a delightful disposition and her industry was something that men talked about with approval. The other girls, Maria and Diane, were still too young to be going about so freely; but whenever Estelle came to our bunkhouse they were always with her.

It was now the end of summer and there was a bright moon in the sky. Not far from Moxee City was a wide grassland where cotton tails and jack rabbits roamed at night. Estelle used to drive her father's old car and would pick up some of us at the bunkhouse; then we would go hunting with their dogs and a few antiquated shotguns.

When we came back from hunting we would go to the Malraux house with some of the men who had musical instruments. We would sit on the lawn for hours singing American songs. But when they started singing Philippine songs their voices were so sad, so full of yesterday and the haunting presence of familiar seas, as if they had reached the end of creation, that life seemed ended and no bright spark was left in the world.

But one afternoon toward the end of the season, Paez went to the bank to get our paychecks and did not come back. The pockmarked bookkeeper was furious.

"I'll get him this time!" he said, running up and down the house. "He did that last year in California and I didn't get a cent. I know where to find the bastard!"

Julio grabbed him by the neck. "You'd better tell me where to find him if you know what is good for you," he said angrily, pushing the frightened bookkeeper toward the stove.

"Let me alone!" he shouted.

Julio hit him between the eyes, and the bookkeeper struggled

violently. Julio picked him up and threw him outside the house. I thought he was dead, but his legs began to move. Then he opened his eyes and got up quickly, staggering like a drunken stevedore toward the highway. Julio came out of the house with brass knuckles, but the bookkeeper was already disappearing behind the apple orchard. Julio came back and began hitting the door of the kitchen with all his force, in futile anger.

I had not seen this sort of brutality in the Philippines, but my first contact with it in America made me brave. My bravery was still nameless, and waiting to express itself. I was not shocked when I saw that my countrymen had become ruthless toward one another, and this sudden impact of cruelty made me insensate to pain and kindness, so that it took me a long time to wholly trust other men. As time went by I became as ruthless as the worst of them, and I became afraid that I would never feel like a human being again. Yet no matter what bestiality encompassed my life, I felt sure that somewhere, sometime, I would break free. This faith kept me from completely succumbing to the degradation into which many of my countrymen had fallen. It finally paved my way out of our small, harsh life, painfully but cleanly, into a world of strange intellectual adventures and self-fulfillment.

The apples were nearly picked when Paez disappeared with our money. We lost interest in our work. We sat on the lawn of the Malraux's and sang. They came out of the house and joined us. The moonlight shimmered like a large diamond on the land around the farm. The men in the bunkhouse came with their violins and guitars. Julio grabbed Dianne and started dancing with her; then the two younger girls were grabbed by other men.

It was while Estelle was singing we heard a gun crack from the dirt road not far from the house. Malraux saw them first, saw the

clubs and iron bars in their hands, and yelled at us in warning. But it was too late. They had taken us by surprise.

I saw Malraux run into the house for his gun. I jumped to the nearest apple tree. I wanted a weapon — anything to hit back at these white men who had leaped upon us from the dark. Three or four guns banged all at once, and I turned to see Maria falling to the ground. A streak of red light flashed from the window into the crowd. Estelle was screaming and shouting to her father. Diane was already climbing the stairs, her long black hair shining in the moonlight.

I saw Julio motioning to me to follow him. Run away from our friends and companions? No! Goddamn you, Julio! I jumped in to the thick of fight, dark with fury. Then I felt Julio's hands pulling me away, screaming into my ears:

"Come on — you crazy punk! Come on before I kill you myself!"

He was hurting me. Blinded with anger and tears, I ran after him toward our bunkhouse. We stopped behind a pear tree when we saw that our house was burning. Julio whispered to me to follow him.

We groped our way through the pear trees and came out, after what seemed like hours of running, on a wide grass plain traversed by a roaring irrigation ditch. Once when we thought we were being followed, we jumped into the water and waited. The night was silent and the stars in the sky were as far away as home. Was there peace somewhere in the world? The silence was broken only by the rushing water and the startled cry of little birds that stirred in the night.

Julio led the way. We came to a dirt road that led to some farmhouses. We decided to stay away from it. We turned off the road and walked silently between the trees. Then we came to a

wide desert land. We followed a narrow footpath and, to our surprise, came to the low, uninhabited, wide desert of the Rattlesnake Mountains. The stars were our only guide.

We walked on and on. Toward dawn, when a strong wind came, we jumped into the dunes and covered our heads with dry bushes until it had passed by. We were no longer afraid of pursuit. We were in another land, on another planet. The desert was wide and flat. There were rabbits in the bushes, and once we came upon a herd of small deer. We ran after them with a burning bush, but they just stood nonchalantly and waited for us. When we were near enough for them to recognize our scent, they turned about and galloped down the sand dunes.

When morning came we were still in the desert. We walked until about noon. Then we came to a narrow grassland. We stood on a rise and looked around to see the edge of the desert. Julio started running crazily and jumping into the air. I ran after him. At last we came to the beginning of a wide plain.

The town of Toppenish was behind us now, and the cool wind from the valley swept the plain. We rested under a tree. Julio was different from other oldtimers; he did not talk much. I felt that he had many stories within him, and I longed to know America through him. His patience and shameless kindness had led me away from Moxee City into a new life.

After a while we crossed the plain again, hiding behind the trees whenever we saw anyone approaching us. I was too exhausted to continue when we reached Zillah, where some children stoned us. We hid in an orange grove and rested. At sunset we started again. When we were nearing the town of Granger, I heard the sudden tumult of the Yakima River. Julio started running again, and I followed him. Suddenly we saw the clear, cool water of the river. We sat in the tall grass, cooling our tired bodies beside the bright stream.

I was the first to enter the water. I washed my shirt and spread it to dry on the grass. Sunnyside was not far off. I could hear the loud whistle of trains running seaward.

"This is the beginning of your life in America," Julio said. "We'll take a freight train from Sunnyside and go to nowhere."

"I would like to go to California," I said. "I have two brothers there — but I don't know if I could find them."

"All roads go to California and all travelers wind up in Los Angeles," Julio said. "But not this traveler. I have lived there too long. I know that state too damn well . . ."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

Suddenly he became sad and said: "It is hard to be a Filipino in California."

Not comprehending what he meant, I began to dream of going to California. Then we started for Sunnyside, listening eagerly to the train whistle piercing the summer sky. It was nearly ten in the evening when we reached Sunnyside. We circled the town, and then we saw the trains — every car bursting with fruit — screaming fiercely and chugging like beetles up and down the tracks. The voices of the trainmen came clearly through the night.

We stopped in the shadow of a water tower. Julio disappeared for a moment and came back.

"Our train leaves in an hour," he said. "I'll go around for something to eat. Wait for me here."

I waited for him to come back for several hours. The train left. Then I began to worry. I went to town and walked in the shadows, looking into the darkened windows of wooden houses. Julio had disappeared like a wind.

I returned to our rendezvous and waited all night. Early the next morning another train was ready to go; I ran behind the

boxcars and climbed inside one. When the train began to move, I opened the door and looked sadly toward Sunnyside. Julio was there somewhere, friendless and alone in a strange town.

"Good-bye, Julio," I said. "And thanks for everything, Julio. I hope I will meet you again somewhere in America".

Then the train screamed and the thought of Julio hurt me. I stood peering outside and listening to the monotonous chugging of the engine. I knew that I could never be unkind to any Filipino, because Julio had left me a token of friendship, a seed of trust, that ached to grow to fruition as I rushed toward another city.

Bluenenido N. Santos

Scent of Apples

When I arrived in Kalamazoo, it was October and the war was still on. Gold and silver stars hung on pennants above silent windows of white and brick-red cottages. In a back-yard an old man burnt leaves and twigs while a grey-haired woman sat on the porch, her red hands quiet on her lap, watching the smoke rising above the elms, both of them thinking the same thought, perhaps, about a tall grinning boy with blue eyes and flying hair who went out to war, where could he be now this month when leaves were turning into gold and the fragrance of gathered apples was in the wind?

It was a cold night when I left my room at the hotel for a usual speaking engagement. I walked but a little way. A heavy wind coming up from Lake Michigan was icy on the face. It felt like winter straying early in the northern woodlands. Under the lamp posts the leaves shone like bronze. And they rolled on the pavements like the ghost feel of a thousand autumns long dead, long before the boys left for far away lands without great icy winds and promise of winter early in the air, lands without apple trees, *the singing and the gold!*

It was the same night I met Celestino Fabia, "just a Filipino farmer," as he called himself, who had a farm about thirty miles

east of Kalamazoo.

"You came all that way on a night like this just to hear me talk?" I asked.

"I've seen no Filipino for so many years now," he answered quickly. "So when I saw your name in the papers where it says you came from the islands and that you're going to talk, I came right away."

Earlier that night I had addressed a college crowd, mostly women. It appeared they wanted me to talk about my country; they wanted me to tell them things about it because my country had become a lost country. Everywhere in the land the enemy stalked. Over it a great silence hung; and their boys were there, unheard from, or they were on their way to some little-known island in the Pacific, young boys all, hardly men, thinking of harvest moons and smell of forest fire.

It was not hard talking about our own people. I knew them well and I loved them. And they seemed so far away during those terrible years that I must have spoken of them with a little fervor, a little nostalgia.

In the open forum that followed, the audience wanted to know whether there was much difference between our women and the American women. I tried to answer the question as best as I could, saying, among other things, that I did not know much about American women except that they looked friendly, but differences or similarities in inner qualities such as naturally belonged to the heart or to the mind, I could only speak about with vagueness.

While I was trying to explain away the fact that it was not easy to make comparisons, a man rose from the rear of the hall, wanting to say something. In the distance he looked slight and old and very brown. Even before he spoke, I knew that he was

like me, a Filipino.

"I'm a Filipino," he began, loud and clear, in a voice that seemed used to wide open spaces. "I'm just a Filipino farmer out in the country." He waved his hands toward the door. "I left the Philippines more than twenty years ago and have never been back. Never will perhaps. I want to find out, sir, are our Filipino women the same like they were twenty years ago?"

As he sat down, the hall filled with voices, hushed and intrigued. I weighed my answer carefully. I did not want to tell a lie, yet I did not want to say anything that would seem platitudinous, insincere. But more important than these considerations, it seemed to me that moment as I looked towards my countryman, I must give him an answer that would not make him so unhappy. Surely, all these years he must have held on to certain ideals, certain beliefs, even illusions peculiar to the exile.

"First," I said as the voices gradually died down and every eye seemed upon me. "First, tell me what our women were like twenty years ago."

The man stood to answer. "Yes," he said, "you're too young . . . Twenty years ago our women were nice, they were modest, they wore their hair long, they dressed proper and went for no monkey business. They were natural, they went to church regular; and they were faithful." He had spoken slowly, and now, in what seemed like an after-thought, added, "It's the men who ain't."

Now I knew what I was going to say.

"Well," I began, "it will interest you to know that our women have changed — but definitely! The change, however, has been on the outside only, inside, here," pointing to the heart, "they are the same as they were twenty years ago, God-fearing,

faithful, modest and nice."

The man was visibly moved. "I'm very happy, sir," he said in the manner of one who, having stakes on the land, had found no cause to regret one's sentimental investment.

After this, everything that was said and done in that hall that night seemed like an anticlimax; and later, as we walked outside, he gave me his name and told me of his farm thirty miles east of the city.

We had stopped at the main entrance of the hotel lobby. We had not talked very much on the way. As a matter of fact, we were never alone. Kindly American friends talked to us, asked us questions, said good night. So now I asked him whether he cared to step into the lobby with me and talk shop.

"No, thank you," he said, "you are tired. And I don't want to stay out too late."

"Yes, you live very far."

"I got a car," he said; "besides . . ."

Now he smiled, he truly smiled. All night I had been watching his face, and I wondered when he was going to smile.

"Will you do me a favor, please," he continued, smiling almost sweetly. "I want you to have dinner with my family out in the country. I'd call for you tomorrow afternoon, then drive you back. Will that be all right?"

"Of course," I said. "I'd love to meet your family." I was leaving Kalamazoo for Muncie, Indiana in two days. There was plenty of time.

"You will make my wife very happy," he said.

"You flatter me."

"Honest. She'll be very happy. Ruth is a country girl and hasn't met many Filipinos. I mean Filipinos younger than I am, cleaner looking. We're just poor farmer folks, you know. We

don't get to town very often. Roger, that's my boy, he goes to school in town. A bus takes him early in the morning and he's back in the afternoon. He's a nice boy."

"I bet he is. I've seen the children of some of the boys by their American wives, and the boys are tall, taller than the father, and very good looking."

"Roger, he'd be tall. You'll like him."

Then he said goodbye and I waved to him as he disappeared in the darkness.

The next day he came, at about three in the afternoon. There was a mild, ineffectual sun shining; and it was too cold. He was wearing an old brown tweed jacket and worsted trousers to match. His shoes were polished, and although the green of his tie seemed faded, a colored shirt hardly accentuated it. He looked younger than he appeared the night before, now that he was clean shaven and seemed ready to go to a party. He was grinning as we met.

"Oh, Ruth can't believe it. She can't believe it," he kept repeating as he led me to his car — a nondescript thing in faded black that had known better days and many hands. "I says to her, I'm bringing you a first class Filipino, and she says, aw, go away, quit kidding, there's no such thing as first class Filipino. But Roger, that's my boy, he believed me immediately. What's he like daddy, he asks. Oh you will see, I say, he's a first class. Like you, Daddy? No, no, I laugh at him, your daddy ain't first class. Aw, but you are, daddy, he says. So you can see what a nice boy he is, so innocent. Then Ruth starts griping about the house, but the house is a mess, she says. True it's a mess, it's always a mess, but you don't mind, do you? We're poor folks, you know."

The trip seemed interminable. We passed through narrow

lanes and disappeared into thickets, and came out on barren land overgrown with weeds in places. All around were dead leaves and dry earth. In the distance were apple trees.

"Aren't those apple trees?" I asked, wanting to be sure.

"Yes, those are apple trees," he replied. "Do you like apples? I got lots of 'em. I got an apple orchard. I'll show you."

All the beauty of the afternoon seemed in the distance, on the hills, in the dull soft sky.

"Those trees are beautiful on the hills," I said.

"Autumn's a lovely season. The trees are getting ready to die, and they show their color, proud-like."

"No such thing in our own country," I said.

That remark seemed unkind, I realized later. It touched him off on a long deserted tangent, but ever there perhaps. How many times did the lonely mind take unpleasant detours away from the familiar winding lanes towards home for fear of this, the remembered hurt, the long lost youth, the grim shadows of the years; how many times indeed, only the exile knows.

It was a rugged road we were traveling, and the car made so much noise that I could not hear everything he said, but I understood him. He was telling his story for the first time in many years. He was remembering his own youth. He was thinking of home. In these odd moments there seemed no cause for fear, no cause at all, no pain. That would come later. In the night perhaps. Or lonely on the farm under the apple trees.

In this old Visayan town, the streets are narrow and dirty and strewn with coral shells. You have been there? You could not have missed our house, it was the biggest in town, one of the oldest, ours was a big family. This house stood right on the edge of the street. A door opened heavily and you enter a dark hall leading to the stairs. There is the smell of chickens roosting on

the low-topped walls, there is the familiar sound they make and you grope your way up a massive staircase, the bannisters smooth upon the trembling hand. Such nights, they are no better than the days, windows are closed against the sun; they close heavily.

Mother sits in her corner looking very white and sick. This was her world, her domain. In all these years I cannot remember the sound of her voice. Father was different. He moved about. He shouted. He ranted. He lived in the past and talked of honor as though it were the only thing.

I was born in that house. I grew up there into a pampered brat. I was mean. One day I broke their hearts. I saw mother cry wordlessly as father heaped his curses upon me and drove me out of the house, the gate closing heavily after me. And my brothers and sisters took up my father's hate for me and multiplied it numberless times in their own broken hearts. I was no good.

But sometimes, you know, I miss that house, the roosting chickens on the low-topped walls. I miss my brothers and sisters. Mother sitting in her chair, looking like a pale ghost in a corner of the room. I would remember the great live posts, massive tree trunks from the forests. Leafy plants grew on the sides, buds pointing downwards, wilted and died before they could become flowers. As they fell on the floor, father bent to pick them and throw them out into the coral streets. His hands were strong. I have kissed those hands . . . many times, many times.

Finally we rounded a deep curve and suddenly came upon a shanty, all but ready to crumble in a heap on the ground, its plastered walls were rotting away, the floor was hardly a foot from the ground. I thought of the cottages of the poor colored folk in the south, the hovels of the poor everywhere in the land. This one stood all by itself as though by common consent all the

folk that used to live here had decided to stay away, despising it, ashamed of it. Even the lovely season could not color it with beauty.

A dog barked loudly as we approached. A fat blonde woman stood at the door with a little boy by her side. Roger seemed newly scrubbed. He hardly took his eyes off me. Ruth had a clean apron around her shapeless waist. Now as she shook my hands in sincere delight I noticed shamefacedly (that I should notice) how rough her hands, how coarse and red with labor, how ugly! She was no longer young and her smile was pathetic.

As we stepped inside and the door closed behind us, immediately I was aware of the familiar scent of apples. The room was bare except for a few ancient pieces of second-hand furniture. In the middle of the room stood a stove to keep the family warm in winter. The walls were bare. Over the dining table hung a lamp yet unlighted.

Ruth got busy with the drinks. She kept coming in and out of a rear room that must have been the kitchen and soon the table was heavy with food, fried chicken legs and rice, and green peas and corn on the ear. Even as we ate, Ruth kept standing, and going to the kitchen for more food. Roger ate like a little gentleman.

"Isn't he nice looking?" his father asked.

"You are a handsome boy, Roger," I said.

The boy smiled at me. "You look like Daddy," he said.

Afterwards I noticed an old picture leaning on the top of a dresser and stood to pick it up. It was yellow and soiled with many fingerings. The faded figure of a woman in Philippine dress could yet be distinguished although the face had become a blur.

"You . . ." I began.

"I don't know who she is," Fabia hastened to say. "I picked that picture many years ago in a room on La Salle Street in

Chicago. I have often wondered who she is."

"The face wasn't a blur in the beginning?"

"Oh, no. It was a young face and good."

Ruth came with a plate full of apples.

"Ah," I cried, picking out a ripe one, "I've been thinking where all the scent of apples came from. The room is full of it."

"I'll show you," said Fabia.

He showed me a backroom, not very big. It was half-full of apples.

"Every day," he explained, "I take some of them to town to sell to the groceries. Prices have been low. I've been losing on the trip."

"These apples will spoil," I said.

"We'll feed them to the pigs."

Then he showed me around the farm. It was twilight now and the apple trees stood bare against a glowing western sky. In apple blossom time it must be lovely here. I thought. But what about wintertime?

One day, according to Fabia, a few years ago, before Roger was born, he had an attack of acute appendicitis. It was deep winter. The snow lay heavy everywhere. Ruth was pregnant and none too well herself. At first she did not know what to do. She bundled him in warm clothing and put him on a cot near the stove. She shoveled the snow on their front door and practically carried the suffering man on her shoulders, dragging him through the newly made path towards the road where they waited for the U.S. mail car to pass. Meanwhile snowflakes poured all over them and she kept rubbing the man's arms and legs as she herself nearly froze to death.

"Go back to the house, Ruth!" her husband cried; "you'll freeze to death."

But she clung to him wordlessly. Even as she scrubbed her arms and legs, her tears rolled down her cheeks. "I won't leave

you, I won't leave you," she repeated.

Finally the U.S. mail car arrived. The mailman, who knew them well, helped them board the car, and, without stopping on his usual route, took the sick man and his wife direct to the nearest hospital.

Ruth stayed in the hospital with Fabia. She slept in a corridor outside the patients' ward and in the day time helped in scrubbing the floor and washing the dishes and cleaning the men's things. They didn't have enough money and Ruth was willing to work like a slave.

"Ruth's a nice girl," said Fabia, "like our own Filipino women."

Before nightfall, he took me back to the hotel. Ruth and Roger stood at the door holding hands and smiling at me. From inside the room of the shanty, a low light flickered. I had a last glimpse of the apple trees in the orchard under the darkened sky as Fabia backed up the car. And soon we were on our way back to town. The dog had started barking. We could hear it for some time, until finally, we could not hear it any more, and all was darkness around us, except where the head lamps revealed a stretch of road leading somewhere.

Fabia did not talk this time. I didn't seem to have anything to say myself. But when finally we came to the hotel and I got down, Fabia said, "Well, I guess I won't be seeing you again."

It was dimly lighted in front of the hotel and I could hardly see Fabia's face. He had not come down from the car, but he moved to where I had sat, and I saw his hand, extended. I gripped it.

"Tell Ruth and Roger," I said. "I love them."

He dropped my hand quickly. "They'll be waiting for me now," he said.

"Look," I said, not knowing why I said it, "one of these days,

very soon, I hope, I'll be going home. I could go to your town."

"No," he said softly, sounding very much defeated but brave.
"Thanks a lot. But you see, nobody would remember me now."

Then he started the car, and as it moved away, he waved his hand.

"Goodbye," I said, waving back into the darkness. And suddenly the night was cold like winter straying early in these northern woodlands.

I hurried inside. There was a train the next morning that left for Muncie, Indiana, at a quarter after eight.

N.V.M. Gonzalez

The Tomato Game

Dear Greg: You must believe me when I say that I've tried again and again to write this story. The man remains vivid in my memory, alone in his clapboard shack in the middle of a Sacramento Valley tomato field. It is a particularly warm Sunday, in the height of summer. Also, it is the year of my miserable lectureship at Transpacifica University, which caters to the needs of industry like that. Well, it's all because of the Ethnic pot. A certain number of offerings oriented toward the minorities, and the university becomes entitled to certain funds. You have read in the papers how Transpacifica gave an *honoris causa* to a certain personage — a prestigious thing to do — which is that, indeed. Look up the dictionary; I do mean what I say. But to return to that summer when, in a fit of nostalgia I had acceded to go with Sopi — you must know him, of course — look for countrymen who might be involved in a national pastime of cockfighting. It is illegal here, hence a San Francisco *Chronicle* head, "Transpacifica U. Lecturer in Bloody Bird Tourney Raid" did not seem at all unlikely.

We risked it anyhow and got much more. As in myth, the signs were all over. The wooden bridge, the fork of the road, the large track all around us which earlier had been a tomato field, the rich crop as indicated by the harvesting machine to one side

of the field, a menacing hulk . . . You can see how hard I try. Would that I could have it in me to put all this together.

I can tell you at this juncture that Alice and her young man must be somewhere here in America. I have no doubt about this. I am sure that the old man is very much around too. The likes of him have that power. We can be sure he will prevail.

"With such a man," Sopi said to me afterwards, "pride is of the essence. He tells himself and his friends that as soon as he is able — in twenty, thirty years, shall we say — he will return to the Islands and then bring back a bride. How can you begrudge anyone doing just that?" Which kind of talk makes me angry, and at that time I certainly was.

I am now embarrassed, though, over how we behaved at the shack. We could have warned the old man. We could have told him what we felt. Instead, we teased him.

"Look, *lolo*," Sopi said. "Everything seems to be ready, eh?"

For, true enough, the shack contained a brand new bed, a refrigerator, and a washing machine — an absurdity multiplied many times over by the presence, which Sopi had noticed earlier, of a blue Ford coupe in the yard. "That's for her . . ." Sopi had said.

We enjoyed the old man immensely. He didn't take offense — no, the old man didn't. "I've been in this all along, since the start. Didn't I make the best deal possible, *lolo*?"

"Ya, Attorney," the old man said.

"He could have stayed in Manila for a while. Lived with her. Made friends with her at least," Sopi turned to me as if to tell me to keep my eyes off the double bed with the shiny glass headboard. "But his visa was up. He just had to be back. Wasn't that the case, *lolo*?"

"Ya, Attorney. Else nothing here any more for me," the old

man said.

"That would have been too bad. And this taxi-driver boy, will he be coming over too?"

Sopi, of course, knew that the boy was — bag and baggage, you might say.

"That was the agreement," the old man said. "I send him to school — like my own son."

"You know, *lolo*, that that will never do. He's young, he's healthy. Handsome, too."

"You thinking of Alice?" the old man asked.

"She's twenty-three," Sopi reminded him. I figured the old man was easily forty or forty-five years her senior.

"Alice, she's okay. Alice she is good girl," said the old man. "That Tony-boy — he's bright boy."

As an outsider, I felt uneasy enough. But a fatherly satisfaction gleamed in the old man's eyes. There was no mistaking it. Wrong of you, I said to myself, to have cocksure ideas about human nature.

I saw Sopi in the mirror of my prejudices. He was thin but spry, and affected, rather successfully, the groovy appearance of a professional well enough accepted in his community. And, at that, with deserved sympathy. Legal restrictions require that he pass the California bar before admission to the practice of law among his countrymen. Hence, the invention which he called Montalban Import-Export. In the context of our mores he was the right person for the job that the old man wanted done. Alice was Sopi's handiwork in a real sense, and at no cost whatsoever. Enough, Sopi explained to me, that you put yourself in the service of your fellows. I believed him. He knew all the lines, all the cliches.

I could feel annoyance, then anger, welling up inside me.

Then, suddenly, for an entire minute at least, nothing on earth could have been more detestable than this creature I had known by the tag "Sopi." Sophio Arimuhanan, Attorney-at-law. Importer-Exporter. Parenthetically, of brides. And, double parenthesis please, of brides who cuckolded their husbands right from the start. In this instance, the husband in question was actually a Social Security Number, a monthly check, and an airline ticket.

And I was angry because I couldn't say all this, because even if that were possible it would be out of place. I just didn't have the right. I didn't even understand what the issues were. I was to know about the matter of pride later, later. And Sopi had to explain. It was galling to have him do that.

But at that moment I didn't realize he had been saying something else to me. "This Alice — she's a hair-dresser. She'll be a success here. Easily. You know where we found her? Remember? Where did we find her, *lolo*?"

The old man remembered, and his eyes were smiling.

"In Central Market. You know those stalls. If you happen to be off guard, you're likely to be pulled away from the sidewalk and dragged into the shop for a — what do you call it here? — a blow job!

The old man smiled, as if to say "I know, I know . . ."

"We tried to look for her people afterwards. Not that it was necessary. She's of age. But we did look anyway. She had no people any more to worry over." Sopi went on. "She did have somebody who claimed she was an aunt or something. Sold tripe and liver at the Meat Section. She wanted some money; didn't she, *lolo*?"

"Ya, ya," the old man said. "All they ask money. Everyone." And there must have been something exhausting about the act

of recalling all that. I saw a cloud of weariness pass over his face.

"But we fixed that, didn't we?"

"Ya, ya," said the old man.

"Then there was the young man. A real obstacle, this taxi-driver boy. Tony by name," Sopi turned to me, as if to suggest that I had not truly appreciated the role he played. "We knew Tony only from the photograph Alice carried in her purse. But he was as good as present in the flesh all the time. The way Alice insisted that the old man take him on as a nephew; and I had to get the papers through. Quite a hassle, that part of it. It's all over now; isn't it, *lolo*?"

"Ya, ya," said the old man. "I owe nothing now to nobody. A thousand dollars that was, no?"

"A thousand three hundred," said Sopi. "What's happened? You've forgotten!"

"So you need some three hundred more? I get check book. You wait," said the old man.

"There's where he keeps all his money," Sopi said to me.

He meant the old bureau, Salvation Army kind of thing, that stood against the clapboard wall. Obviously, Sopi knew the old man in and out.

"No need for that, *lolo*. It's all paid," he said.

The old man's eyes brightened again. "I remember now!"

"Every cent went where it should go," Sopi said to me.

"I believe you."

"So what does her last letter say?"

"They got ticket now. They coming any day now," the old man said.

"You'll meet them at the airport?"

"Ya."

"You've got a school in mind for Tony-boy?" I asked, addressing, as it were, whoever could provide an answer.

Hardly had I said it, though, than regrets overwhelmed me. I should know about schools. The Immigration Service had not exactly left Transpacifica U. alone, and for reasons not hard to find. They had a package deal out there that had accounted for quite a few Southeast Asian, South Vietnamese, and Singaporean students. Filipinos, too. Visa and tuition seemed workable as a combination that some people knew about. A select few. It was a shame, merely thinking of the scheme. But, strangely enough, my anger had subsided.

"Ya," the old man said. Tony had a school already.

"That's why I wanted you to meet the old man," Sopi said. "Help might be needed in that area — sometime. Who can say?"

"You don't mean Transpacifica, do you?"

"That's your school, all right."

"How so?" I asked.

"Eight hundred dollars a year is what the package costs. The old man paid that in advance. It's no school, and you know that."

"I only work there. It's not my school," I said.

"All right, all right," Sopi said. "There's all that money, and paid in advance, too — so this 'nephew,' bogus though he might be, can come over. You understand. We're all in this."

I began to feel terrible. I wanted to leave the shack and run to the field outside, to the tomatoes that the huge harvesting machine had left rotting on the ground so that the smell of ketchup rose from the very earth. If it did not reach the shack the reason was the wind carried it off elsewhere.

"Ya, they here soon," the old man was saying. "Tomorrow maybe I get telegram. Alice she here. And Tony too. You know I like that boy. Tony's a good boy. Alice — I'm not too sure. But maybe this Tony, he'll be lawyer like you. Make plenty money

like you," said the old man to Sopi.

"Or like him," said Sopi, pointing to me. "Make much much more, plenty-plenty . . ."

The old man seemed overjoyed by the prospect, and I had a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. He had trusted Sopi all along; it was impossible not to believe him now. Tony had more than enough models before him . . .

We had come that Sunday, as I had started to tell you, to see if we could watch a cockfight. When we left the shack finally, Sopi said to me: "To think that that old man hasn't even met the boy."

As we drove down the road toward the fork that led to the wooden bridge, the smell of ripe tomatoes kept trailing us. That huge machine had made a poor job of gathering the harvest; and so here, Greg, is perhaps the message.

Bests.

II. Of Identity and Family

How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife

Manuel E. Arguilla

Love In The Cornhusks

Aida Rivera Ford

Three Pieces of Bread

Roman A. de la Cruz

The Prisoner

Rogelio R. Sikat

Manuel E. Arguilla

How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife

She stepped down from the carretela of Ka Celin with a quick, delicate grace. She was lovely. She was tall. She looked up to my brother with a smile, and her forehead was on a level with his mouth.

"You are Baldo," she said and placed her hand lightly on my shoulder. Her nails were long, but they were not painted. She was fragrant like a morning when papayas are in bloom. And a small dimple appeared momentarily high up on her right cheek.

"And this is Labang of whom I have heard so much." She held the wrist of one hand with the other and looked at Labang, and Labang never stopped chewing his cud. He swallowed and brought up to his mouth more cud and the sound of his insides was like a drum.

I laid a hand on Labang's massive neck and said to her: "You may scratch his forehead now."

She hesitated and I saw that her eyes were on the long curving horns. But she came and touched Labang's forehead with her long fingers, and Labang never even stopped chewing his cud except that his big eyes half closed. And, by and by, she

was scratching his forehead daintily.

My brother Leon put down the two trunks on the grassy side of the road. He paid Ka Celin twice the usual fare from the station to the edge of Nagrebcan. Then he was standing beside us, and she turned to him eagerly. I watched Ka Celin, where he stood in front of his horse, and he ran his fingers through its forelock and could not keep his eyes away from her.

"Maria —," My brother Leon said.

He did not say Maring. He did not say Mayang. I knew then that he had always called her Maria, and that to us all she would be Maria; and in my mind I said — "Maria" — and it was a beautiful name.

"Yes, Noel."

Now where did she get that name? I pondered the matter quietly to myself, thinking Father might not like it. But it was only the name of my brother Leon said backwards and it sounded much better that way.

"There is Nagrebcan, Maria," my brother Leon said, gesturing widely toward the west.

She moved close to him and slipped her arm through his. And after a while she said quietly:

"You love Nagrebcan, don't you, Noel?"

Ka Celin drove away hi-yi-ing to his horse loudly. At the bend of the *camino real* where the big duhat tree grew, he rattled the handle of his braided rattan whip against the spokes of the wheel.

We stood alone on the roadside.

The sun was in our eyes for it was dipping into the bright sea. The sky was wide and deep and very blue above us; but along the saw-tooth rim of the Katayaghan hills to the southwest

flamed huge masses of clouds. Before us the fields swam in a gold haze through which floated big purple and red and yellow bubbles when I looked at the sinking sun. Labang's white coat which I had washed and brushed that morning with coconut husk glistened like beaten cotton under the lamp light and his horns appeared tipped with fire. He faced the sun and from his mouth came a call so loud and vibrant that the earth seemed to tremble underfoot. And far away in the middle of the fields a cow lowed softly in answer.

"Hitch him to the cart, Baldo," my brother Leon said, laughing, and she laughed with him a bit uncertainly, and I saw that he had put his arms around her shoulders.

"Why does he make that sound?" she asked. "I have never heard the like of it."

"There is not another like it," my brother Leon said, "I have yet to hear another bull call like Labang. In all the world there is no other bull like him."

She was smiling at him, and I stopped in the act of tying the *sinta* across Labang's neck to the opposite end of the yoke, because her teeth were very white, her eyes were so full of laughter, and there was a small dimple high up on her right cheek.

"If you continue to talk about him like that, either I shall fall in love with him or become greatly jealous," she said.

My brother Leon laughed and she laughed, and they looked at each other and it seemed to me there was a world of laughter between them and in them.

I climbed into the cart over the wheel and Labang would have bolted for he was always like that, but I kept a firm hold on his rope. He was restless and would not stand still, so that my brother Leon had to say "Labang" several times. When he was

quiet again, my brother Leon lifted the trunks into the cart, placing the smaller on top.

She looked down once at her high-heeled shoes, then she gave her left hand to my brother Leon, placed a foot on the hub of the wheel, and in one breath she had swung up into the cart. Oh, the fragrance of her. But Labang was fairly dancing with impatience and it was all I could do to keep him from running away.

"Give me the ropes, Baldo," my brother Leon said. "Maria, sit down on the hay and hold on to anything." Then he put a foot on the left shaft and that instant Labang leaped forward. My brother Leon laughed as he drew himself up to the top of the side of the cart and made the slack of the rope hiss above the back of Labang. The wind whistled against my cheeks and the rattling of the wheels on the pebbly road echoed in my ears.

She sat straight on the bottom of the cart, legs bent, so that only the toes and heels of her shoes were visible. Her eyes were on my brother Leon's back, I saw the wind on her hair.

When Labang slowed down, my brother Leon handed to me the rope. I knelt on the straw inside the cart and pulled on the rope until Labang was merely shuffling along then I made him turn around.

"What is it you have forgotten now, Baldo?" my brother Leon said.

I did not say anything but tickled with my fingers the rump of Labang: and away we went — back to where we had unhitched and waited for them. The sun had sunk and down from the wooded sides of the Katayaghan hills shadows were stealing into the fields. High up overhead the sky burned with many slow fires.

When I sent Labang down the deep cut that would bring us to

the dry bed of the Waig which could be used as a path to our place during the dry season, my brother Leon laid a hand on my shoulder and said sternly:

"Who told you to drive through the fields tonight?"

His hands were heavy on my shoulder, but I did not look at him nor utter a word until we were on the rocky bottom of the Waig.

"Baldo, you fool, answer me before I lay the rope of Labang on you. Why do you follow the Waig instead of the *camino real*?"

His fingers bit into my shoulder.

"Father, he told me to follow the Waig tonight, *Manong*."

Swiftly, his hand fell away from my shoulder and he reached for the rope of Labang. Then my brother Leon laughed and he sat back and laughing still he said, "And I suppose Father also told you to hitch Labang to the cart and meet us with him instead of with *castaño* and the *calesa*."

Without waiting for an answer he turned to her and said, "Maria, why do you think Father should do that, now?" He laughed and added, "Have you ever seen so many stars before?"

I looked back and they were sitting side by side, leaning against the trunks, hands clasped across knees. Seemingly but a man's height above the tops of the steep banks of the Waig, hung the stars. But in the deep gorge, the shadows had fallen heavily, and even the white of Labang's coat was merely a dim grayish blur. Crickets chirped from their homes in the cracks in the banks. The thick unpleasant smell of *dangla* bushes and cooling sun-heated earth mingled with the clean, sharp scent of *arraís* roots exposed to the night air and of the hay inside the cart.

"Look, Noel, yonder is our star!" Deep surprise and gladness were in her voice. Very low in the west, almost touching the ragged edge of the bank, was the star, the biggest and brightest in the sky.

"I have been looking at it," my brother Leon said. "Do you remember how I would tell you that when you want to see stars you must come to Nagrebcan?"

"Yes, Noel," she said. "Look at it," she murmured, half to herself. "It is so many times bigger and brighter than it was at Ermita beach."

"The air here is clean, free of dust and smoke."

"So it is, Noel," she said, drawing a long breath.

"Making fun of me, Maria?"

She laughed then and they laughed together, and she took my brother Leon's hand and put it against her face.

I stopped Labang, climbed down, and lighted the lantern that hung from the cart between the wheels.

"Good boy, Baldo," my brother Leon said as I climbed back into the cart, and my heart sang.

Now the shadows took fright and did not crowd so near. Clumps of *andadasi* and *arraís* flashed into view and quickly disappeared as we passed by. Ahead, the elongated shadow of Labang bobbed up and down and swayed drunkenly from side to side, for the lantern rocked jerkily with the cart.

"Have we far to go yet, Noel?" she asked.

"Ask Baldo," my brother Leon said, "we have been neglecting him."

"I am asking you, Baldo," she said.

Without looking back, I answered, picking my words slowly:

"Soon we will get out of the Waig and pass into the fields. After the fields is home, *Manang*."

"And how far is that?"

"About two kilometers, *Manang*."

"So near already."

I did not say anything more, because I did not know what to make of the tone of her voice as she said her last words. All the laughter seemed to have gone out of her. I waited for my brother Leon to say something, but he was not saying anything. Suddenly, he broke out into song and the song was "Sky Sown with Stars" — the same that he and Father sang when we cut hay in the fields of nights before he went away to study. He must have taught her the song because she joined him, and her voice flowed into his like a gentle stream meeting a stronger one. And each time the wheels encountered a big rock, her voice would catch in her throat, but my brother Leon would sing on, until laughing softly, she would join him again.

Then we were climbing out into the fields, and through the spokes of the wheels the light of the lantern mocked the shadows. Labang quickened his steps. The jolting became more frequent and painful as we crossed the low dikes.

"But it is so very wide here," she said. The light of the stars broke and scattered the darkness so that one could see far on every side, though indistinctly.

"You miss the houses, and the cars, and the people and the noise, don't you?" My brother stopped singing.

"Yes, but in a different way. I am glad they are not here."

With difficulty, I turned Labang to the left, for he wanted to go straight on. He was breathing hard, but I knew he was more thirsty than tired. In a little while, we drove up the grassy side

onto the *camino real*.

"— you see," my brother Leon was explaining, "the *camino real* curves around the foot of the Katayaghan hills and passes by our house. We drove through the fields, because — but I'll be asking father as soon as we get home."

"Noel," she said.

"Yes, Maria."

"I am afraid. He may not like me."

"Does that worry you still, Maria?" my brother Leon said. "From the way you talk, he might be an ogre, for all the world. Except when his leg that was wounded in the Revolution is troubling him, Father is the mildest-tempered, gentlest man I know."

We came to the house of Lacay Julian and I spoke to Labang loudly, but Moning did not come to the window; so I surmised she must be eating with the rest of her family. And I thought of the food being made ready at home and my mouth watered. We met the twins, Urong and Celin, and I said "Hoy," calling them by name. And they shouted back and asked if my brother Leon and his wife were with me. And my brother Leon shouted to them and then told me to make Labang run; their answers were lost in the noise of the wheels.

I stopped Labang on the road before our house and would have gotten down, but my brother Leon took the rope and told me to stay in the cart. He turned Labang into the open gate and we dashed into our yard. I thought we would crash into the bole of the *camachile* tree, but my brother Leon reined in Labang in time. There was light downstairs in the kitchen, and Mother stood in the doorway, and I could see her smiling shyly. My brother Leon was helping Maria over the wheel.

The first words that fell from his lips after he had kissed

Mother's hand were:

"Father — where is he?"

"He is in his room upstairs," Mother said, her face becoming serious. "His leg is bothering him again."

I did not hear anything more because I had to go back to the cart to unhitch Labang. But I had hardly tied him under the barn when I heard Father calling me. I met my brother Leon going to bring up the trunks. As I passed through the kitchen, there were Mother and my sister Aurelia and Maria and it seemed to me they were crying, all of them.

There was no light in Father's room. There was no movement. He sat in the big armchair, by the western window and a star shone directly through it. He was smoking, but he removed the roll of tobacco from his mouth when he saw me. He laid it carefully on the windowsill before speaking.

"Did you meet anybody on the way?" he asked.

"No, Father," I said. "Nobody passes through the Waig at night."

He reached for his roll of tobacco and hitched himself up in the chair.

"She is very beautiful, Father."

"Was she afraid of Labang?" My father had not raised his voice, but the room seemed to resound with it. And again I saw her eyes on the long curving horns and the arm of my brother Leon around her shoulders.

"No, Father, she was not afraid."

"On the way —"

"She looked at the stars, Father. And *Manong* Leon sang."

"What did he sing?"

"'Sky Sown With Stars.' She sang with him."

He was silent again. I could hear the low voices of Mother and my sister Aurelia downstairs. There was also the voice of my brother Leon, and I thought that Father's voice must have been like it when he was young. He had laid the roll of tobacco on the window-sill once more. I watched the smoke waver faintly upward from the lighted end and vanish into the night outside.

The door opened and my brother Leon and Maria came in.

"Have you watered Labang?" Father spoke to me.

I told him that Labang was resting yet under the barn.

"It is time you watered him, my son," my father said.

I looked at Maria and she was lovely. She was tall. Beside my brother Leon, she was very tall and very still. Then I went out, and in the darkened hall the fragrance of her was like a morning when papayas are in bloom.

Aida Rivera Ford

Love In the Cornhusks

Tinang stopped before the Señora's gate and adjusted the baby's cap. The dogs that came to bark at the gate were strange dogs, big-mouthed animals with a sense of superiority. They stuck their heads through the hogfence, lolling their tongues and straining. Suddenly, from the gumamela row, a little black mongrel emerged and slithered through the fence with ease. It came to her, head down and body quivering.

"Bantay, Ay, Bantay!" she exclaimed as the little dog laid its paws upon her skirt to sniff the baby on her arm. The baby was afraid and cried. The big animals barked with displeasure.

Tito, the younger master, had seen her and was calling to his mother. "Ma, it's Tinang. Ma, Ma, it's Tinang." He came running down to open the gate.

"Aba, you are so tall now, Tito."

She smiled her girl's smile as he stood by, warding the dogs off. Tinang passed quickly up the veranda stairs lined with ferns and many-colored bouganville. On the landing she paused to wipe her shoes carefully. About her, the Señora's white and lavender butterfly orchids fluttered delicately in the sunshine. She noticed though that the purple *waling-waling* that had once

been her task to shade from the hot sun with banana leaves and to water with a mixture of charcoal and eggs and water was not in bloom.

"Is no one covering the *waling-waling* now?" Tinang asked. "It will die."

"Oh, the maid will come to cover the orchids later."

The Señora called from inside. "Ano, Tinang, let me see your baby. Is it a boy?"

"Yes, Ma," Tito shouted from downstairs. "And the ears are huge!"

"What do you expect?" replied his mother. "His father is a Bagobo. Even Tinang looks like a Bagobo now."

Tinang laughed and felt a warmth for her former mistress and the boy Tito. She sat self-consciously on the black narra sofa, for the first time a visitor. Her eyes clouded. The sight of the Señora's flaccidly plump figure, swathed in a loose waistless housedress that came down to her ankles, and the faint scent of *agua de colonia* blended with kitchen spice, seemed to her the essence of the comfortable world, and she sighed thinking of the long walk home through the mud, the baby's legs straddled to her waist, and Inggo, her husband, waiting for her, his body stinking of *tuba* and sweat, squatting on the floor, clad only in his foul under-garments.

"Ano, Tinang, is it not a good thing to be married?" the Señora asked, pitying Tinang because her dress gave way at the placket and pressed at her swollen breasts. It was, as a matter of fact, a dress she had given Tinang a long time ago.

"It is hard," Señora said. "Didn't I tell you what it would be like, huh? . . . that you would be a slave to your husband and that you would work with a baby eternally strapped to you. Are you not pregnant again?"

Tinang squirmed at the Señora's directness but admitted she

was.

"Hala! You will have a dozen before long." The Señora got up. "Come, I will give you some dresses and an old blanket that you can cut into things for the baby."

They went into a cluttered room which looked like a huge closet and as the Senora sorted out some clothing Tinang asked, "How is Señor?"

"Ay, he is always losing his temper over the tractor drivers. It is not the way it was when Amado was here. You remember what a good driver he was. The tractors were always kept in working condition. But now . . . I wonder why he left all of a sudden. He said he would be gone for only two days . . ."

"I don't know," Tinang said. The baby began to cry. Tinang hushed him with irritation.

"Oy, Tinang, come to the kitchen; your Bagobito is hungry."

For the next hour, Tinang sat in the kitchen with an odd feeling; she watched the girl who was now in possession of the kitchen work around with a handkerchief clutched in one hand. She had lipstick on, too, Tinang noted. The girl looked at her briefly but did not smile. She set down a can of evaporated milk for the baby and served her coffee and cake. The Señora drank coffee with her and lectured about keeping the baby's stomach bound and training it to stay by itself so she could work. Finally, Tinang brought up, haltingly, with phrases like "if it will not offend you" and "if you are not too busy," the purpose of her visit — which was to ask Señora to be a *madrina* in baptism. The Señora readily assented and said she would provide the baptismal clothes and the fee for the priest. It was time to go.

"When are you coming again, Tinang?" the Señora asked as Tinang got the baby ready. "Don't forget the bundle of clothes

and . . . oh, Tinang, you better stop by the drugstore. They asked me once whether you were still with us. You have a letter there and I was going to open it to see if there was bad news but I thought you would be coming."

A letter! Tinang's heart beat violently. Somebody is dead; I know somebody is dead, she thought. She crossed herself and after thanking the Señora profusely, she hurried down. The dogs came forward and Tito had to restrain them. "Bring me some young corn next time, Tinang," he called after her.

Tinang waited a while at the drugstore which was also the post office of the barrio. Finally, the man turned to her: "Mrs., do you want medicine for your baby or for yourself?"

"No, I came for my letter. I was told I have a letter."

"And what is your name, Mrs.?" he drawled.

"Constantina Tirol."

The man pulled a box and slowly went through the pile of envelopes, most of which were scribbled in pencil. "Tirol, Tirol. Tirol: . . ." He finally pulled out a letter and handed it to her. She stared at the unfamiliar scrawl. It was not from her sister and she could think of no one else who would write to her.

Santa Maria, she thought; maybe something has happened to my sister.

"Do you want me to read it for you?"

"No, no." She hurried from the drugstore, crushed that he should think her illiterate. With the baby on one arm and the bundle of clothes on the other and the letter clutched in her hand she found herself walking toward home.

The rains had made a deep slough of the clay road and Tinang followed the prints left by the men and the carabaos that had gone before her to keep from sinking in mud up to her knees. She was deep in the road before she became conscious

of her shoes. In horror, she saw that they were coated with thick, black clay. Gingerly, she pulled off one shoe after the other with the hand still clutching the letter. When she had tied the shoes together with the laces and had slung them on an arm, the baby, the bundle, and the letter were all smeared with mud.

There must be a place to put the baby down, she thought, desperate now about the letter. She walked on until she spotted a corner of a veld where cornhusks were scattered under a *kalamansi* tree. She shoved together piles of husks with her foot and laid the baby down upon it. With a sigh, she drew the letter from the envelope. She stared at the letter which was written in English.

My dearest Tinay,

Hello, how is life getting along? Are you still in good condition? As for myself, the same as usual. But you're far from our lover.

Tinay, do you still love me? I hope your kind and generous heart will never fade. Someday or somehow I'll be there again to fulfill our promises.

Many weeks and months have elapsed. Still I remember bygone days. Especially when I was suffering with the heat of the tractor under the heat of the sun. I was always in despair until I imagine your personal appearance coming forward bearing the sweetest smile that enabled me to view the distant horizon.

Finally, I could not return because I found that my mother was very ill. That is why I was not able to take you as a partner of life. Please respond to my missive at once so that I know whether you still love me or not. I hope you did not love anybody except myself.

I think I am going beyond the limit of your leisure hour so I close with best wishes to you, my friends Goding, Serafin, Bondio, etc.

Yours forever.

Amado

P.S. My mother died last month.

*Address your letter: Mr. Amado Galuran
Binalunan, Cotabato*

It was Tinang's first love letter. A flush spread over her face and crept into her body. She read the letter again. "It is not easy to be far away from our lover . . . I imagine your personal appearance coming forward . . . Someday, somehow I'll be there to fulfill our promise . . ." Tinang was intoxicated. She pressed herself against the *kalamansi* tree.

"My lover is true to me. He never meant to desert me. Amado, she thought. Amado.

And she cried, remembering the young girl she was less than two years ago when she would take food to the Señor in the field and the laborers would eye her furtively. She thought herself above them for she was always neat and clean and in her hometown, before she went away to work, she had gone to school and had reached the sixth grade. Her skin, too, was not as dark as those of the girls who worked in the fields weeding around the clumps of abaca. Her lower lip jutted out disdainfully when the farm hands spoke to her with many flattering words. She laughed when a Bagobo with two hectares of land asked her to marry him. It was only Amado, the tractor driver, who could look at her and make her lower her eyes. He was very dark and wore filthy and torn clothes on the farm, but on Saturdays when he came up to the house for his week's salary, his hair was slicked down and he would be dressed as well as

Mr. Jacinto, the school-teacher. Once he told her that he would study in the city night-schools and take up mechanical engineering someday. He had not said much more to her, but one afternoon when she was bidden to take some bolts and tools to him in the field, a great excitement came over her. The shadows moved fitfully in the bamboo groves she passed and the cool November air edged into her nostrils sharply. He stood unmoving beside the tractor with tools and parts scattered on the ground around him. His eyes were a black glow as he watched her draw near. When she held out the bolts, he seized her wrist and said, "Come," pulling her to the screen of trees beyond. She resisted but his arms were strong. He embraced her roughly and awkwardly, and she trembled and gasped and clung to him . . .

A little green snake slithered languidly into the tall grass a few yards from the *kalamansi* tree. Tinang startled violently and remembered her child. It lay motionless on the mat of husk. With a shriek she grabbed it wildly and hugged it close. The baby awoke from its sleep and cried lustily. *Ave Maria Santisima*. Do not punish me, she prayed, searching the baby's skin for marks. Among the cornhusks, the letter fell unnoticed.

Roman A. de la Cruz

Three Pieces of Bread

When I woke up from an afternoon siesta, I could hear Manong Baldo outside asking questions and a familiar voice of a small boy answering him. This must be Edong, I said to myself. How come that he is back, after so many months? I rose hurriedly, put on my slippers and went out of the room.

In the sala, a little boy was standing before Manong Baldo. It took me some time before I could recognize the boy. At first glance, he looked like someone else.

True, there was still that familiar beam in his face as he turned and gazed at me with a smile. Small teeth and a round face. Small nose and round clear eyes. But so many features had changed about him. He had so thinned that his head appeared too big. His skin had turned dark, tanned by the torrid heat, and he reeked with a foul smell of damp earth, burnt grass and carabao dung.

He wore woolen trousers, the pair Mother had sewed for him out of the ends of father's old pants which Manong Enong had given him when the latter arrived from America two years before. But they were caked with mud at the seats and needed a good washing. His face too was grimy and needed a good

scrubbing.

Edong was an orphan of five. His father died before he was born, when his brother and sisters were small. When Edong was three, their mother left for the city bringing with her the eldest of the brood, a girl big enough to work as housemaid, leaving the rest of the kids of two boys and two girls to the care of a raspy and cruel grandmother. Their mother never came back, nor wrote, nor remembered to send them money from the city. It was said that she and her daughter led immoral lives there.

As for the kids left behind, they were not well cared for by their grandmother. The eldest of them, Inday, a lean, curly-haired girl of fourteen, was given to serve a certain family. The rest of the kids were left alone by themselves, beaten by their grandmother now and then, and abandoned to hunger and roam around the town. And then one day Mother came across the youngest, Edong, crying on the street. Mother had brought the boy home and fed him and the boy stayed with us. He stayed for two months with us with nobody looking for him. He gained flesh, and became a happy, bouncing kid, playful and ready to run errands. Edong became a fixture in the house, was regarded as one of us.

One day, a tall, high-cheeked, sallow-eyed and stern-faced woman came to our house, introduced herself as the grandmother of Edong and demanded compensation for the services of the boy during his stay in our house. Mother was irked. She said it was out of charity that she took the boy into our home, that at five he was more to be babied than be made to work for compensation and that she did not have any contract with her before the boy started to live with us.

The old woman was so insistent that she and mother nearly quarrelled. In the end, the woman took the boy away, saying there was somebody who was willing to take Edong for some

compensation. I remembered very much when the boy left home. He was wearing those pants Mother had newly made for him.

That was three months ago. And here he was back. I turned him around from Manong Baldo to ask him some questions myself.

"Are you going to stay with us this time?" I asked.

"Yes," the boy replied. "I am going to stay now. Manang Esen and Manong Narding came with me but they will be going back to the barrio without me."

"What have you been doing since you left us?"

"We stayed with our relatives in the farm. We pastured carabaos in the grazing grounds. Each of us had two carabaos to tender. And, mind you, one of my carabaos gave birth to a baby carabao last week. It was a cute little thing!" he said with pride.

I felt glad for the boy. I felt glad to think that he would stay with us at last. We would be happy again. We would be taking a bath at the Aklan River and gamble among the shallows, play hide and seek around the mausoleum of General Francisco del Castillo in evenings when the moon would be bright, and fly kites on windy days on the wide hospital grounds. When he is of age, father and mother had said they would send him to school like us. He would be educated, and from his signs of intelligence and good character, he would likely grow to be a good man someday and make up for the accident of his beginnings.

"Yes, you will stay with us from now on," I said. "This afternoon we will go to the river to take a bath. It is very shallow now and so nice to play on the sand. when we come up from the river you will put on new clothes. You will not watch carabaos anymore, nor work in the sun."

Edong grinned childishly, picturing the happy life he would

enter into again.

"**TENSHUN!**" Manong Baldo commanded without preliminaries.

Just as he had been taught before, Edong snapped into stiffness: chest out, stomach in, chin pinned back to the neck, arms glued straight to the sides, and feet together with balls open at a 45-degree angle.

"That's the real cadet," Manong Baldo said approvingly. "Now — hand salute!"

With fingers straight and closed together the boy mechanically raised his right hand to touch the end of his right eyebrow, just as he had been taught, and then just as smartly brought it down to his side.

"Rest!" Manong Baldo said, and the boy relaxed on one leg, smiling self-consciously but proudly as one who had just accomplished a feat of skill.

Just then Esen, his elder sister who had been with Mother in the store downstairs, came up to the house to tell Edong that they were now going back to the barrio.

"No, no. I am not going," Edong said. "I am staying here."

"What? And let grandmother ask for your salary? Are you not ashamed of yourself? You do not know how to work."

Esen took hold of him by the wrist and pulled him to the door, but Edong tugged resistingly. "No! no! I will not go! I will not go! Leave me alone!" he cried protestingly, beating his sister's hand with his small fist. But Esen was stronger and he struggled vainly like a fish caught with a hook. When they were near the door, Edong grabbed at a post and clung to it tenaciously until Esen found it hard to pull him away. So she left him and went downstairs.

We heard Esen tell Mother in the store that Edong would not go with them. We could not hear Mother make any comment. Edong looked up at Manong Baldo and me pleadingly, hoping we would intervene for him, but we did not know what to do. Edong went downstairs and we went to the window to watch them from there.

Mother was standing by the door of our store not saying anything, while Edong was looking up pleadingly at her. The boy's eyes seemed to want to say, "Please, Nanay Mayang, let me stay. Please tell Manang Esen to leave me alone."

Probably he was thinking how Mother had been so good to him, treating him like her own child. Of evenings, when he was yet with us, Mother would wake him up for supper when he fell asleep early and then he would bawl out loud, peeved for being disturbed, like any other child, but Mother would patiently appease him and feed him in spite of his caprices. In many ways, Mother had shown her care for him which he hadn't experienced elsewhere before or since.

Edong was looking up at Mother thus, but Mother did not say anything. She was probably thinking of the child's grandmother, how she would again come and demand for the boy's wages or probably accuse her of kidnapping the boy or something of that sort. And when I realized that Edong was really not meant to stay with us, I went to my room and leaned out of the window to watch the kids go on their way back to the barrio. And then I saw them, the three orphans, walking away in the street.

I watched them as they trudged away. The sun in the west was hot against them, defining three thin little dark figures in the sunset. They had not gone far when I heard Mother calling Edong's name. The three of them stopped and looked back, and then Edong came back running towards the store. My heart

leaped with hope. Had Mother decided to let him stay after all? I could not see him now from my window. I was anxious to know, hopefully, what Mother called him back for. But soon Edong was back with his brother and sister. He was holding proudly in his raised hands three pieces of bread, and he gave one each to his brother and sister when he reached them. They began talking excitedly and giggled happily.

But even as they walked away, Edong kept looking back at us with a sad longing in his eyes. He tagged a little behind the other two, his feet dragging unwillingly over the pebbles.

v

Rogelio R. Sikat

The Prisoner

The crowd at the municipal building grounds was small at first but as the sun grew hot and as news spread that Kabesang Tano had been hacked and killed, the town hall's compound began to be filled with men — hustling, pushing, shoving men, each one eager to get close to the jail.

"Is it true, Tata Selo?"

"He was throwing me out of my farm so I hacked him."

Inside the jail, Tata Selo, an old farmer, tightly gripped the iron bars. An inch-long swollen wound gaped on his forehead. Tears welled at the corners of his dim eyes that now and then exuded the look of one groping for his way in the dark. He wore faded gray farmclothes heavily patched at the elbows and at the back. His knee-long pants made of durable white salt sack bore dried mud stains. A farmer whose farm bounded his was talking to him. He had been one of those who successfully slipped past the line of policemen keeping the clamoring men in order.

"I could not believe it, Tata Selo," the farmer said shaking his head. "I really could not believe it."

Tata Selo ran his trembling fingers over his head wound. The blood had now clotted. Before him, just a little distance away

from the jail, policemen were shouting and pushing back people who wanted to see him. The sun shone hot on their bodies, no wind blew, and clouds of dust trampled by their feet hovered above their heads.

"Why should he throw me out of my farm?" Tata Selo asked.

"Have I been cheating him of his shares? Have I deceived him? Isn't it true many dislike me because I do not give even a single sheaf away during harvests?"

Tata Selo had not moved from his position in front of the jail. He gazed outside but he was not looking at anyone or anything.

"You should not have hacked the Kabesa," a young man, son of the richest landowner in San Roque, said. Like a privileged public official, he could freely stride between the police and the jail. Tall and fair-skinned, he wore sunglasses and an expensive, sporty-looking red T-shirt. He had his hands on his hips as he smoked and spoke to Tata Selo.

Tata Selo looked up at him.

"He was throwing me out of my farm, sir," he complained. "Where else, sir, could I go if I no longer had a farm to work on?"

The rich young man, not more than twenty from his looks, gesticulated. "It's not reason enough for you to hack the Kabesa. He owns the land you cultivate. If he wants to drive you out, he can do so anytime."

Tata Selo's hoary face almost came out of the bars.

"Ay, but you do not understand," he said trying to smile at the young man who flipped his cigarette and crushed it out with his heels. "Don't you know the land used to be ours, sir? It had only been mortgaged when my wife got sick, forfeited when I wasn't able to pay the Kabesa on time. I dream of buying back the land, sir. This is why I do not give even a single sheaf during

anihan: If I could not buy it back, then I wish, I wish I could till it, sir. I was begging the Kabesa, 'If it is possible, Kabesa' I said, sir, 'if it is possible, don't drive me out please. I can still farm, 'Besa. It's true I'm already old, but as you can very well see, I'm still strong.' But . . . Ay! sir, look at what he did. He beat me up, beat me with his cane instead. Look at my head wound, sir, look at it."

The young man fished out a cigarette. He lighted it, left Tata Selo and strode to where a policeman stood.

"What really happened, Tata Selo?"

Tata Selo stirred. He saw a farm boy peeping at the bars. Tata Selo smiled. Here, at last, was a farmer, or son of a farmer. Surely, this one would believe him. The boy had his broad-brimmed hat tilted on the forehead. Glossy dark from constant toiling in the sun, his arms and legs showed the criss-crossing little white scratches of keen rice blades. A scythe's handle stuck out at the waist of his muddy pants.

"He went for me at the farm, son," Tata Selo explained. "There at the sluice way he went. He told me I must leave the farm, told me he had found somebody else who would work on it. When I begged him not to drive me out, *ay! amang*, he beat me with his cane. I pleaded with him, for without a farm to work on where else could I go?"

The boy, half-understanding, blinked his eyes.

"You really have nowhere else to go, Tata Selo."

Tears rolled down Tata Selo's cheeks. The boy gazed at him wordlessly.

"Is he dead?"

Tata Selo's knuckles whitened. Sobbing, his head dropped at the crook of his arm.

"How's Saling now, Tata Selo?"

The boy was referring to the seventeen-year-old daughter of Tata Selo. Motherless, she worked as household help in Kabesang Tano's place. It was only two days ago that she had returned. Saling was made queen of last year's farmers' fiesta but Tata Selo would not let her have a part in it.

"How's Saling now, Tata Selo?"

Tata Selo gripped the bars more tightly.

The town mayor had not yet talked with Tata Selo. It was almost eleven o'clock when he came, accompanied by the chief of police. They had been to the Kabesa's house. The jeep they were riding in blared haughtily as it made its way through the crowd which, at that time, had not yet left.

The crowd milled around the vehicle immediately after it jolted to a halt.

"Is he dead, Mayor?"

"Where was he hacked?"

The sweltering men hustled, pushed, shoved each other as they got around the mayor. The fattish *alcalde* raised his hands to pacify them. The big chief of police kicked some.

"Where was he hit?"

"On the mouth," the mayor announced. Dipping his pudgy forefinger at the right corner of his lips, he quickly ran it upwards to the base of his right ear. "Teeth smashed. Poor Kabesa, he could hardly be recognized."

"*Ang putang inang matanda! That hijo de puta!*"

The men once more clamored and the police started clubbing some of them. The mayor finally decided to have Tata Selo taken out of jail and brought to his office. Two policemen took him out.

"You'll surely be jailed," the mayor said as Tata Selo was ushered into his office. He motioned the pale Tata Selo to sit down in the chair in front of his desk. Tata Selo's hand shook as he placed it over the glass top of the table. "What really made you hack the Kabesa?" the mayor demanded.

It took time before Tata Selo could reply.

"He was throwing me out of my farm, *Presidente*," he explained. He had never learned to call town chiefs mayors. In Quezon's time, mayors were called *presidentes*. "I do not want to leave it. That land was once ours, ours, sir. It had only been mortgaged and forfeited —"

"I really know that." The mayor slapped a big palm on his desk.

Tata Selo swallowed hard. When he lifted his face again, tears welled at the corners of his dim eyes.

"I, *Presidente*," he said, "am still strong. I can still farm. Was it reasonable of him to drive me out? I'm still strong, *Presidente*, still strong."

"Where did you hack the Kabesa?"

"I was at the sluice patching some bank breaches when the Kabesa came. I knew the Kabesa was watching me so I put my best to impress him, to make him realize I'm still strong, that I can still farm. Suddenly, sir, he called me and when I approached, he said I should leave my farm as somebody else would now work on it.

"But why, Kabesa?" I asked, sir. 'Have I been negligent? Have I cheated you of your shares?' He just said I must leave. 'Why, 'Besa?' I asked him again, sir. 'I'm still strong as you yourself have seen.' He came to me, I continued begging him, but ay! sir, he beat me, beat me with his cane instead."

"You hacked him then," observed the chief of police.

It was quiet inside the mayor's office. All eyes — there were even clerks who were able to enter — centered on Tata Selo who sat slouched, fingers fidgeting over his muddy pants. His dirty, muddy feet with calloused toes spread out as a result of not having worn shoes, shifted restlessly on the newly-waxed floor.

"Your daughter, I heard she's in the Kabesa's house," the mayor said.

Tata Selo did not answer.

"You are being asked." The chief of police nudged Tata Selo. Tata Selo lifted his face.

"Saling has come home, *Presidente*."

"When?"

"Two days ago."

"Isn't she helping there?"

"For three months now, sir."

"Why did she come home?"

With downcast eyes and clenching his fists, Tata Selo said: "She's sick, *Presidente*."

At the stroke of twelve — it was heralded by the clanging of bells at the church just across the municipal building — the mayor left hurriedly to take his lunch. Tata Selo remained in the custody of three policemen, one of them the chief.

"So you've killed the Kabesa," the burly chief said eyeing Tata Selo. He stalked toward the old man who had remained bowed and unmoving in his seat.

"He was throwing me out of my farm, sir," Tata Selo explained.

The chief's grizzly hand flew and Tata Selo's face smacked the floor. Blood oozed between his fingers as he pressed his head wound opened by the blow.

"Ay, sir, he beat me, beat me with his cane, sir." Crying and shaking as he explained, Tata Selo clung to the chief's khaki uniform.

The chief picked him up by the back of his patched farmclothes and gave him another blow that sank in his stomach.

"He beat me, beat me with his cane. Ay! sir, he beat me, beat me with his cane."

At the door, the two other policemen looked and conversed unconcernedly.

"It was the Kabesa who recommended him to the mayor," one of them said.

As he was saying that, Tata Selo fell like a piece of clothing when the chief struck again.

The sun rose fiery red the next morning. Inside the municipal compound, there were littered pieces of paper left unswept the previous day. The dust had not yet quieted although it should have been raining regularly at the advent of that month. Whenever vagrant winds strayed inside the compound, tiny whirls picked up bits of paper and played with them capriciously in the air.

"You will perhaps be brought to the capital," the newly bathed and freshly dressed mayor addressed the old man inside the jail. "You will be confined there."

There was not even a makeshift bed inside the jail and Tata Selo sat slumped on the dirty cement floor. Around him, the little pools of water had started drying up. His puny, dark legs lay outstretched, showing white, pallid soles. Limp arms propped him against steel matting which served as the back wall of the jail. Within his reach, but yet untouched, were a dented tin cup containing cheap, black coffee and a plate of rice. Flies swarmed over what seemed to be his breakfast.

"The least that can be given you is a life term," continued the mayor. He lighted a cigar and went near the bars. His shoes were newly shined.

Tata Selo's voice was barely audible. "I killed the Kabesa; kill me as I killed him."

The mayor's hands avoided touching the dusty bars. He had not touched them, yet he rubbed his palms together and examined them if they had been dirtied. When he glanced at Tata Selo, he saw the old man's head hanging limply over to one side.

There were people coming again to the *municipio*. Among them were a few farmers, come from the fields to see Tata Selo. The majority of the onlookers were town *paisanos*. As they lined up, each one wondered and could not believe what transpired, though it had already been made known that the Kabesa would be interred that afternoon. They stared in disbelief and wonder at Tata Selo who had killed the Kabesa, as if he were an unusual beast put inside a cage for all to behold.

The sun, like yesterday's, was again hot. At about two o'clock, Tata Selo's daughter came. Upon seeing the prostrate figure of her father, she rushed toward the jail and, shocked at what she saw, let out a loud cry.

The mayor learned Saling had come and he had her brought to his office. A little while after, it was Tata Selo whom he ordered fetched. Two policemen took out Tata Selo. They almost carried him bodily as he could hardly walk.

Tata Selo's strength seemed to come back as they entered the mayor's office. He saw the girl sitting before the *presidente*.

Saling rushed to embrace her father.

"You should not have come here, Saling," Tata Selo whined. He buckled to the floor. "You're sick, child, you're sick."

Tata Selos's daughter sat speechless as she held the half-conscious father. Her long, black hair was dishevelled and the dress she wore seemed that which she had worn the two previous days. Her pale, gaunt face hardened as she threw accusing looks at the mayor and the policemen.

"Go home, Saling," Tata Selo muttered. "Let it be . . . Let it all be. Go home, child. Do not tell them anything." He passed out.

The mayor ordered him taken back to the jail. Once inside, curious onlookers flocked and ogled at Tata Selo.

"Water-cured last night," a farmer said. "I know it. Wrapped him with a wet sack so no marks show at all."

"The daughter, has she come?"

"She's at the mayor's."

The two policemen deposited Tata Selo in one corner of the jail. He fell after having been thus propped but when his ears caught the grating sound of the jail door being locked, he dragged himself toward the bars, gripped them tight and for some moments seemed as if he would twist them. He called for the policemen but his call made no sound and the policemen were already gone. With his right hand groping outside, he fell flat on his face on the floor. He remained in this position until he heard someone waking him.

"Tata Selo . . . Tata Sel . . ."

It was a small voice. Tata Selo raised his face. His bleary eyes made out the owner of the voice waking him: It was the farm boy who visited him yesterday.

Sitting on his haunches, the boy grasped Tata Selo's hand reaching for him.

"There, *amang*, is Saling at the *Presidente's*" Tata Selo told

the boy. "Tell her to go home, take her home, son." His face fell once more on the floor. The boy hesitated for a moment, and although apprehensive, decided to carry out the old man's wish.

The sun's rays were already aslant at about four in the afternoon. The jail had already claimed a small shaded part, there where the steel matting was, but Tata Selo was not there. He was out front, clutching the jail's bars. He had his gaze outside, the red sun rays reflected in his dim, ever-searching eyes. Outside the jail, the farm boy he had asked to take Saling home leaned ruefully against the bars. The boy was telling Tata Selo that he had not been allowed to enter the mayor's office, but he no longer listened, muttering things — not about being driven out nor getting back his farm. . . .

As he gripped the bars and looked outside, Tata Selo kept saying everything had been taken away from them, ay! everything but everything had already been taken away from them.

III. A Sense of History

The Stuff of Heroes

J. Eddie Infante

A Pilgrim Yankee's Progress

Nick Joaquin

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The Stuff of Heroes

Of course Antonio Aguirre didn't know the story of his father, for then, he was only three years old. He didn't know, for instance, of the great event that happened on the night of November 20, 1892, when Crispin Aguirre, blindfolded, walked into that room that smelled strongly of kerosene in a mysterious house in the mysterious district of Tondo.

Crispin was escorted by four able-bodied men, two holding him firmly, one on each bicep, as the other two walked stiffly behind him. At a precise spot, they stopped and removed the blind.

The first thing that caught his attention was the small table in front of him, because on it rested a human skull, a shining dagger, a foot long and with pearl inlaid handle, and a gaslamp that flickered sombrously and cast grotesque figures on the shabby walls. Slowly, apprehensively, he brought his eyes up. He saw two of the hardest men he had ever seen in his life, facing him across the table, looking at him impassively.

He told himself that he should not waver, that the moment was here.

"Crispin Aguirre, what is the Gomburza?"

His answer was quick. "The Gomburza, sir, represents Fathers Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora, Filipino patriots, executed by the Spaniards by garrote on the morning of February 17, 1872.

The men at the table looked at each other briefly.

The other said, "You are Spanish, are you not?"

"I am, sir, by blood." He looked at the man staunchly in the eyes. "But my heart is Filipino. I am Filipino."

The first man barked: "Why are you Filipino?"

"Sir, I was born in Manila, in 1870. I have breathed Filipino air, eaten Filipino food from Filipino soil and sea, and I am married to a Filipina."

The second man fired another shot: "What is the Liga Filipina?"

"The Liga Filipina, sir, is a patriotic society founded by Dr. Jose P. Rizal, right here in Tondo, on July 3rd, this year, for the purpose of unifying the country into one solid body, of rendering mutual protection in every want and necessity, of defense against violence and injustice, the encouragement of education, agriculture and commerce, and the study and application of reforms."

Once again the men at the table looked at one another; so did those on his side.

The first man said, "Why do you know the answers so well?"

"I have made a point to know, sir."

"Why?"

"When a man longs for something so urgently, so desperately, he strives to attain it. I have prepared myself for this moment."

The second man leaned forward and gave him a piece of

paper. Crispin examined it.

"Are you ready, Crispin Aguirre?"

"I am, sir."

The two men rose and stood militarily. "Your right fist above your heart," said the first man.

Crispin slapped his fist over his heart so hard everyone in the room heard the majestic thump.

Then he began, his voice charged with emotion:

"In the name of God and of my country, I promise to defend with valor and integrity the aims of the Katipunan, and to keep its secrets, to obey its orders, to help the members in times of danger and need, to recognize the authority of its leaders, and not to be a traitor to its mandates."

The men brought their fists down; so did Crispin.

Then the first one shoved the dagger, handle toward Crispin, as the second produced a feather pen and a crisp document and set these on the table. Sweating profusely, Crispin shot an eye at the first man. The man nodded. Whereupon Crispin drove the dagger's point into his left forearm just above the wrist. He withdrew the dagger and blood spurted like a red spring. He set the bloody dagger on the table and picked up the feather pen. He dipped the pen into the wound and stooped to sign his name on the paper.

After he had signed it he returned the pen to the second man. Blood continued to ooze out of the wound. A man at the rear passed over to him a piece of cloth with ground guava leaves in it. Crispin wrapped his wound with this.

Then the two men stepped from behind the table and approached him and alternately gave him a bear hug, saying, "Maligayang bati. Kapatid. Mabuhay ang Filipinas!" Crispin

Aguirre had tears in his eyes.

Crispin was twenty-three. An oiler at the railroad company (which was inaugurated only the year before), he rode the Manila-Dagupan line. Milagros, his gentle and homely wife, and Antonio, his three-year-old son, were almost always left alone in the little house in Paco. But whenever he came home, usually twice a week, his arms would be full of fish and vegetables and coconut candy and rice. Crispin liked to bring things home to his wife and son.

He never told her that he had joined the Katipunan, because he had been sworn to strict secrecy. "You are not to tell anyone, not even your wife," was the order. And his wife found no evidence in him of any activity other than his work. It was four years later, on the morning of August 30, 1896, that Milagros finally knew the score. The big day was here. Crispin could stall no longer; he had to come out with the truth.

Milagros was in tears, so was Antonio, now seven, as Crispin descended the stairs and walked away briskly, proudly, and disappeared round the street corner.

That night General Aguinaldo and his crack troops attacked the Guardia Civil headquarters in the town of Kawit. The Revolution had begun! Before dawn Crispin fell.

Three days later, Milagros received a letter in General Aguinaldo's own hand. It said:

I share the grief that must be yours at the passing of your beloved husband, Lt. Crispin Aguirre. But I rejoice in the knowledge that there are men like him who could die so gloriously in the name of Freedom. I am honored now to think that I had the privilege of having Lt. Aguirre in my Command. I pray that if one day I should myself fall in the field of battle, God grant that I do so in the same exalted manner that Lt. Aguirre

chose, for I cannot think of any other way for a soldier to die. Please be brave, Mrs. Aguirre, for the dawn is near. My warm personal regards, I am, yours sincerely. It was signed simply: Emilio Aguinaldo. On the left hand corner of the letter, at the bottom: 2 September 1896. In the field.

Milagros burst into tears after reading it, and Antonio, not knowing what it was all about, but merely at the sight of his mother crying, cried too.

She took on a job as laundrywoman in Intramuros, and although the pay was small and barely enough to keep the both of them alive, she managed somehow, by rigid budgeting and great personal deprivation, to send Antonio to trade school, where the boy learned Reading, Writing, Spanish Language, Spanish History, and, most useful, Carpentry.

One afternoon, in school, word went around in hushed tones that someone would be shot at the Luneta early the next day. Antonio was instantly flushed with curiosity and excitement. The idea of a man being shot to death in an open field, for all to see, made him tremble. And yet he hastily made arrangements with three of his classmates for a rendezvous at six the next morning, near the Victoria Gate on Muralla Street. Before the appointed hour, Antonio and his friends were up on the acacia trees. Their position was perfect, they commanded an unmarred view of the event.

Many people had arrived now, quiet and grieving people, and many more kept coming from various directions, who discreetly stayed at a fair distance from the area which was heavily cordoned by the Guardia Civil with fixed bayonets.

A horse-drawn carriage arrived, and a mountainous uniformed, be-medalled Spaniard stepped down from it. There were other carriages and soldiers on horseback, some priests, a company of Spanish and Filipino soldiers, and many women,

most of them already in tears.

Then the doomed man arrived under heavy escort.

"There he is!" Antonio called to his friends in the branches; but his heart instantly began to hammer against the walls of his tender chest.

The doomed man wore a black suit, and although his hands were tied behind him, as he walked alongside a Spanish priest, he appeared unafraid, his head high, his movements without panic. They stopped halfway between the squad of riflemen and the spot where he was to stand. They talked for some time, and then the priest walked away solemnly and joined his brothers.

They heard the hollered orders in Spanish. The soldiers aimed. Antonio's body shook atop the tree; his hands and feet suddenly felt cold. He heard the word distinctly: "Fuego!" — then the burst of gunfire. He turned his face away, for he couldn't summon the courage to look, but he caught a glimpse of the man recoiling, as though he wanted to see and take with him the faces of his executioners. Then he fell on his face; in a moment he was motionless.

The news swept across the length and breadth of the archipelago; and the air seemed charged suddenly with a deadly tension that was felt everywhere. The next day the pupils learned from a lady teacher that the man's name was Dr. Jose P. Rizal.

The turn of the century was filled with sweat, blood, death, tears, love and glory. A thousand heroisms big and small, were happening every day; men were writing history not on paper, not with pen; for the written word melts on the paper that is the earth, unless written in the ink of blood. Men were writing history in the watches of night in small nipa huts, in watery caves, in open fields under the stars, across rivers, and deep in

the jungles.

Mother and son had been mercifully spared from the classic upheavals of 1898. Some of Commodore Dewey's shots, undoubtedly aimed at the Spanish Armada, had, as things like these would sometimes happen, missed their mark, and had landed instead in the heart of Manila, and in at least two instances, these carriers of death had missed their house by a matter of yards. It had been a terrifying experience, but, thank God, they came out of it alive.

In 1904, however, tragedy couldn't be put off much longer. While hanging some clothes in the yard, Milagros was bitten by a mad dog. No doctor, either Filipino or American, could be found in time, and hours later, when at last a tottering physician was sighted down the street, he said, apologetically, that he didn't have the serum she needed. As apologies don't save lives, Milagros died seven hours later.

And so at fifteen Antonio Aguirre found himself alone, with scarcely anything to hold on to, but a few mementoes — his mother's meager clothing (which he refused to give away), some personal belongings, photographs of herself when she was a young maiden, pictures of Crispin, love letters (also of Crispin), a gold necklace and crucifix, and — did he see correctly? — a letter from the legendary General.

Yellowed with age, he read it over and over, and the more he read it the more he became convinced that an injustice had been done somewhere, of which he was the sorry butt.

He thought bitterly that he didn't deserve the kind of beating he was getting from life. He was the son of a hero, by God!

Once again he saw his father side by side with his General, charging, shouting the holy names of the gods of Freedom, fighting hand-to-hand, thinking of nothing but the high ideals it was his privilege to possess. Did he mind if he lost his life? Did he

even think for a moment of his wife and son? No, sir. Because his wife and son were not in the least important. What were they, indeed, compared to the enslaved millions he was trying to set free?

And he fell. The General said that he fell so gloriously. And he went down with his rifle spitting fire and blasting away till the last pull at the trigger produced but a harmless tick. Did he think of death then? No, sir. The thought of death was the farthest from his mind. He knew that he wouldn't die. Oh no, he wouldn't. A man who is fighting for the voice of the people, which in fact is the Voice of God, will be protected by that same God. He had thought only of the enemy that he wished to kill more of, the enemy that represented all he had stood against.

Yes, Crispin Aguirre was a hero — and Antonio, was he a hero's boy? A lump rose in his throat. He felt like crying.

He skipped across the swamps of Anak Bayan Street. He was hungry and he had two centavos. Good enough. He would go to that Chinese store on Herran Street for a cup of coffee (one centavo) and three pieces of *pan de sal* (another centavo), and from there he would go look for a job in Intramuros, any job, but preferably in one of those antique furniture shops.

He turned right on Dart Street, and he saw two boys molesting a girl, about fifteen, who carried a basket of vegetables. They were dragging her away toward the bushes as the girl fought back and cried. The basket fell on the mud spilling some eggplants and tomatoes.

Antonio stood for a moment, stunned, not knowing what to do. "Help! Help!" the girl sobbed.

Whereupon Antonio shot forward, shouting, "Hey! Leave her alone! Leave her alone!"

The boys saw him coming and released their hold on the girl. In no time at all Antonio was in the thick of battle. He landed a

smashing straight on the face of one, who careened backwards and dropped on the seat of his pants. The other let go a blow at Antonio's right eye. This infuriated Antonio, he hit out and the boy fell. When Antonio turned to look for the other, he was nowhere. "Get up!" Antonio said, "Come on, get up! You want some more?"

The boy got up and, before Antonio could swing again, ran away galloping like a colt.

From the bushes the girl appeared. Antonio was breathless.

"Thank you," she said shyly.

"Don't mention it," Antonio said, touching his right eye.

"What is your name?"

"Antonio," he said, "Antonio Aguirre."

"My name is Felicidad," the girl said, "and I want to thank you again for saving me from those boys."

"It's all right," Antonio said, grinning lamely and walking away.

The girl looked at him with sad and wondering eyes till he was lost among the trees.

He would take that coffee now, and the pan de sal. Ah, but he was starving! Of course as he trudged on and worried where in the heavens he was to scratch for the centavos for his next full meal, the poor young man had no way of knowing that within himself, too, ran the firm impatient stuff of which heroes are made.

Nick Joaquin

A Pilgrim Yankee's Progress

The uneasy lunch came to an end. The Camachos had felt it would never be over: they would eternally sit there, spooning food to their mouths while pondering what on earth to start talking about next. Actually — Edong Camacho informed his wife — the meal had lasted a bare forty minutes.

They had a moment to themselves now, their American guest having been shown to his room. They could breathe again.

Pepang Camacho said: "I could see those forty minutes were as funny for him as they were painful for us. What I fail to see is why, why."

She and her mother were doing the dishes; Edong stood in the kitchen doorway, strapping on his watch.

He said: "We probably are being penalized for something some other people did. He may have been sold rotten liquor or rotten women. He holds that against us."

"These Americans!" exclaimed Doña Concha. "Must they be such great innocents, even in their vices."

"Tell us, mother," said Pepang, "how was he when he arrived?"

"I was at the market," she explained to her husband. "Oh, Ed, do you think he may have been offended because we were not here to receive him?"

"More likely, the door offended him," said Doña Concha. "He was eyeing it with little affection when I opened it to him."

"Whatever did they do to him? I feel so mean! Was I nice during lunch, Ed? Did I show I resented his not being pleasant?"

"Did you?"

"Resent the way he behaved? No. I was too busy keeping the talk going round. And most of the time I just felt baffled . . . Oh, come and get me out of this apron. My fingers won't work. Look, they're trembling . . . How about this afternoon?"

"I have to be at the office after all."

"You won't be able to take him to where this uncle of his is buried?"

"I was going to let you do it instead. But he has upset you enough already. Stop squirming, will you? How you've knotted yourself into this thing."

"Oh, nonsense. Of course, I'll take him."

"Of course, you will not. Look at the way you are now."

"But, Ed, that's one reason we asked him to come down, no? One of us will have to take him to the place. Oh, don't worry about me. I want to make it up to him, whatever was done to him that's so nasty. Mother, will you come along too?"

"He would only regard me as the crowning insult, I fear. And he appears offended enough. Besides, how would my grey hairs look in a 'jeep'? No, no; we will humor the boy. Since the American does not believe in the duenna, we will not afflict him with one."

"Is that ours coming down now?" asked Edong.

The three of them stood still and listened. Noting how the footsteps lagged coming down the stairs, they glanced at one another.

Then: "Hurry, mother, hurry, Ed," whispered Pepang. "It will not be nice for him to come down and not find us around."

* * *

Doña Concha Galang, widow of Moreno, was a girl of fifteen when she first saw Americans. This was on an April morning in the first year of this century and she and her mother and sisters were on a small boat going down the Pasig. They were coming back to the City after almost a year in Laguna, where they had 'evacuated.' During the trip they had craned their necks and peered from bank to bank, hoping (though with no little terror) to catch sight of the strange and awful men from across the sea, the new lords now of the land.

The Galang house in Paco stood on the riverbank; its imposing azotea opened on a broad tiled stairway that swept right down to the water. As the boat approached, the Galang women marveled to see a brilliant gathering sporting on their azotea. All the primary colors were moving about on it, and up and down the steps. Then, the boat having glided nearer, they gasped collectively. For those masses of color, they now saw, were shawls and blouses and skirts; were, in fact, their very own shawls, their very own blouses, their very own skirts. And the creature moving in those clothes — the monstrously huge men, fiery red of face and golden of hair, with cigars dangling from their mouths and big boots sticking out from under the delicately swelling rainbow skirts that hardly reached to their knees — those gorgeously colored and gorgeously appareled giants were, indubitably, the strangers they had so craved a terrified glimpse of.

Doña Concha was never quite to recover from the shock of

that first encounter. All her life, she could not look on an American without catching her breath and warning herself not to stare; in her mind, she was busy rigging him up in the drooping laces and the vivid balloon skirts of her girlhood.

She had been delighted, however, when her son-in-law Edong announced that he had found the GI grandson of old Mr. Newman and had invited the boy down for the weekend. Old Andrew Newman was one of the few persons on earth of whom Doña Concha stood in awe; he was an old-timer who had come over early in American times to establish the firm in which her father and, afterwards, her husband had been manager. Edong, too would have been in line for that very desirable position if the firm had not been dissolved just before the war. But old Newman was still alive, over there in America, and had already expressed an intention of abandoning retirement and returning to business. It might pay, Edong had remarked, to be nice as possible to his grandson.

But what if the grandson will not let us, wondered Doña Concha, watching, later that afternoon, her daughter and the American drive away in the jeep. For young Newman had clearly come in a spirit of gay malice, as one comes to enjoy a highly unsuccessful pageant put on by one's foes. He had better not push Pepang too far though, thought Doña Concha, turning away from the window.

The drinks were still set out on the parlor table. She poured herself a cup, took a long sip, pulled up an armchair and sank down in it, groaning with relief. And as she sipped the liquor she fell to pondering what made Americans so big. One would think old Newman huge enough, but his grandson was tremendous. A pity that they did not keep their figures. Narrow-waisted now, and wide-shouldered; the skin with the fire-glow; the hair a dull gold; the eyes like fresh violets; the thin straight line of the lips.

locking up the jaw into a triangle the austere nose soared away from — young Newman looked very much like his grandfather, before age, drink and success had polished the curls off his dome, multiplied his chins and inflated his waistline. A nice-looking boy really: the grandson. The nastiness was probably only his delightful way with strangers.

But delightful or not, mused Doña Concha, closing her eyes and leaning back in the chair, he had better be careful about Pepang. And who knew? He might do Pepang good. And Edong too. Might shock them both back to life. Oh, they had been such a gay and active couple. Too gay and active, she had felt once. In the fighting to liberate the City they had lost everything — their home and their two small boys . . .

When Doña Concha opened her eyes again she was still holding the empty cup but she was not thinking of Pepang and Edong. She was thinking about the American. Not young Newman in particular; simply the American. He had been given her room, she remembered, and her clothes were in there. Before she quite realized why, she was hurrying up the stairs. Her heart pounded as she opened the door of the room; and it occurred to her, fleetingly, that all over the world where Americans were the women were surely up to some similar snooping.

Once inside the room, however, she felt disappointed. Nothing had happened here, everything was in its place. The late afternoon sunshine bristled in through the curtains. At the foot of the bed stood Newman's bag and pair of slippers. She opened a couple of the drawers of her bureau: within lay her clothes, undisturbed.

She began to feel foolish, but still frightened too, the room being so quiet. She tiptoed to the door, paused there a moment and, holding her breath, took a quick last look around the room.

She was the young Concha for a moment, going down the Pasig on the small boat, craving (with desperate terror) to see an American.

* * *

At about that time, Pepang Camacho was standing before the end of the gravestones of that old walled cemetery just outside the City where, since Spanish times, white foreigners of the Protestant faiths have been buried.

The inscription on the gravestone proclaimed it sacred to the memory of Sergeant John Emmet Newman of the United States Army; born on May 4, 1877, in Temperance, New Hampshire; killed in action on December 2, 1899, in the Philippines.

Pepang glanced up at the American soldier standing at her side. The cool dim graveyard, more orchard than graveyard now, roofed over almost entirely by its trees, seemed to have subdued the rancor in him. He was polite now and looked deathly tired. She had begun to like him.

She said: "It was not here he was first buried. He died out in the provinces. When your grandfather came over he had the remains transferred here."

"I know," murmured Newman, staring down at the gravestone. Then, as if to bring himself to, he gave his head a shake, dug his hands into his pockets and brought out matches and a rather crumpled cigarette. And as he lighted it, speaking into his cupped hands, he mumbled:

"'He rests, he is quiet, he sleeps in a strange land . . .'"

Pepang leaned forward.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Oh, nothing. You know what? I've long dreamt of coming here, of making a sort of pilgrimage to this place."

"Was he that real to you? Most grand-relatives aren't, don't you find?"

"This great-uncle and a certain unspeakable great-great-grand-father of mine I have found much too real," boomed the American suddenly and unexpectedly grinned down at her.

Now what? wondered Pepang, grinning back at him, though she couldn't for the life of her say what all the grinning was about: she thought the conversation solemn enough.

"Too real," sighed the American, sucking at his cigarette. "And you know another thing? They were both over here."

"The unspeakable great-great-grandfather too?"

"Him and me and this one. The three of us. One for all and all for one. I'm the third circumnavigator. Oh, grandfather Andrew was here too but he never left home. He doesn't count. Just me and my great-uncle and my great-great-grandfather."

Pepang began to feel all this was too much for her and decided to sit down. Young Newman promptly dropped down on the grass, too.

"I'm not kidding," he went on. "Ever heard of the Clippers? The ones from New England, I mean. The ships. Loveliest that ever hit water. Well, my great-great-grandfather — he was captain of one of those. He was around these parts lots of times. Ceylon and Madagascar and the Indies. Came here to Manila to buy a cigar and stayed so long to smoke it the Spics had to call out the army to chase him away. Boy, was he mad! Told them he'd come back with a cannon and blow their walls down on them. He'd have done it too, you bet. Only he got mixed up in some other trouble down in Borneo. Went there to get the cannon and picked up the local princess for good measure. The natives chased him clear back to Salem harbor."

"Quite a character, wasn't he?" commented Pepang.

"Oh, he was a good guy. Only he didn't like New England."

"Funny way of showing his feelings."

"This one didn't, either."

"Your great-uncle? Was he a character, too?"

"Oh, no. He was the romantic sort. Oh, I am, too. But I try not to show it."

"What was he romantic about?"

"Don't laugh. The East."

"And so he ran away on a Clipper ship and sailed off to the Orient —"

"Uh-uh. No more Clipper ships for him. Those days were over. The unspeakable captains were long dead. Ceylon and Madagascar and the Indies — they weren't even names to Americans anymore. Nothing was left of the old days except a few shawls and fans and carved idols rotting away in the attics."

"So, what did your uncle do?"

"Well, he'd go up there to the attic when he was a kid and bury his face in all that sweet-smelling stuff, whispering the names of the strange places they'd come from and trying to imagine Puritans among the islands and bazaars and temples of the East. They wouldn't fit in somehow. And then he'd go down and out to the porch and look up Main Street and he'd see the Methodist church and Mr. Higgin's General Store and Ed's poolroom and a saloon, and then he'd look down Main Street and see the Baptist Church and Mr. Pelter's General Store and Kelly's poolroom and another saloon and then he'd run to his room and write down in his diary how lonely he was and practically dying of suffocation . . ."

"The poor kid . . . But I don't understand. Your grandfathers didn't need a map to tell them where Ceylon was. Or Manila."

But for their grandchildren those places weren't even names!"

"We were too busy," replied the American, somewhat dryly. "We had a huge continent to tackle and a great many other things to do besides remembering what Manila was."

"But to have forgotten at all!"

"Oh, we Americans have a genius for forgetting. Especially things that don't pay anymore. It'll be harder now, I suppose. The world has become so small. But for our primitives, it wasn't only easy, it was required. Those old Yankees weren't going to let the world upset them: they like themselves too much as they were. The East was only a market, was only where they bought and sold and let out steam. They took care not to become a part of anything they saw. That was easy too. Their Puritan flesh was their armor. They suffered no sea-change. Or we might have been spared the reformers and the realtors. Venice became what it was because the East came to the Adriatic. But the Indies gathered at Salem harbor, and Salem remained — Salem. Boston sailed to India, and came back — Boston."

And all the Bostonians will be going back Bostonians this time too, mused Pepang.

She said aloud: "You make America sound like a sort of nunnery."

"America is a sort of nunnery."

She could not help laughing at that, and the American was presently laughing with her.

He said: "You mean, because we don't behave like nuns?"

She shook her head, giggling. "But, then, I don't know how Americans behave when there isn't a war around. How do they?"

"Well, we — we behave."

"Boston back as Boston, eh?"

"Exactly. And that's what worried this great-uncle of mine. He thought there was something wrong about how we were built. That we didn't have pores or something. Jesus, was he glad when the war with Spain finally — "

"That comic-opera war?"

"Oh, he knew it was comic-opera all right. But for a million boys like him, it was an escape at last, a release from the boredom and the tyranny of the small towns. You should read his letters. Coming over, he could hardly sleep, he was so excited. He was sailing east at last. He'd sit around on the deck watching the skies and he thought the stars looked larger and that there were more of them."

"Took a war to make him really see them, didn't it?"

"Him and a million other boys. And he thought the war might do more. Might help make America become a part of the world instead of being a world to itself. That all those astonished American boys that sailed out to discover the Orient afresh might discover it for good, and that the blood they spilled here might help fix the Orient in the American imagination."

"And he was wrong?"

"Completely. He came here, he fought here, he died here, and some thirty years afterwards Manila was again an unknown quantity for Americans. Though, of course, they were quite sure it wasn't canned goods."

"How about now? Would you remember now?"

"No helping it that I can see. We went the hard way to discover the world and America is wherever we've made ourselves part of the earth. You can't look along Main Street now without seeing Tarawa at one end and Anzio at the other."

"You never thought, did you," smiled Pepang, "that the

pilgrimage you dreamt of making to this grave would turn out so grim and so expensive?"

"Expensive is right," chuckled the American, looking rueful, "though I guess every pilgrimage is, to be worth making." And turning towards the gravestone, leaned forward and clapping his knees in his arms: "Oh, it was quite a voyage, his and mine, from that attic where the shawls and fans are. I used to go up there myself. I'd bury my face in the silks, too, and roll the strange names around on my tongue. Now, when I go home, the names won't be strange anymore; they'll be American. I suppose that's what the War was about."

Rather an American assumption, thought Pepang. But she was not at all annoyed. She was sure now she liked this boy. Not only liked him, respected him. But it was getting late. And her companion seemed to have gone off into a trance, staring at the gravestone. He looks cute, really. All those blond curls. But my behind is sore from all this sitting. And why ever didn't I think to bring a coat? Oh, no — not the navy blue one with the fur, Josie. Not that one ever again. It' perished. Burned . . .

And instantly, she was seeing — and hearing — their house explode into flames. That first explosion, like all the world splitting apart . . . The minor explosions afterwards, so rapidly continuous she heard them as one roar . . . And then from among the flames — loudest, clearest, keenest of all — the sound of her children's voices, the sound of her children screaming in vain . . .

Pepang abruptly rose to her feet and the American, startled, glanced up.

For a moment she could only stare back at him, biting her lips. Then: "It's late, isn't it?" she said quietly. "Shall we be going?"

The American stood up and side by side they walked slowly across the graveyard.

I'm a fake, Pepang was telling herself. I'm just acting. No one can suffer like this and live. I must be making up the pain. It was all right to feel guilty once but you can't go on feeling guilty forever or you start enjoying feeling guilty. I must stop it, stop it. God doesn't let your children die a horrible death just because you play mah-jong for three years.

"Anything the matter?" inquired the American.

She smiled up at him and shook her head. "I was just having a little talk with myself," she said.

"Gave yourself a spanking, didn't you?"

"Why, yes. How ever did you know?"

"Oh, I could see you were pretty disappointed," replied the American.

Pepang stopped short and stared at him.

"Disappointed! What do you mean?"

"Oh, come now. I'm a disappointment, ain't I? I did none of the things you expected me to do, did I? I snatched no kisses, made no passes. You've been waiting all afternoon for me to love you up. Now, you're bawling yourself out because I didn't, aren't you?"

Pepang Camacho felt herself go rigid, her hands arrested at her breast, the blood burning slowly up to her lifted face. All the world had suddenly become so quiet she could hear her heart beating.

When the seventh extremely loaded bus refused to stop for him, Edong Camacho decided to walk home. It was dusk by then and getting chilly. He rolled down his shirt-sleeves and turned up the collar. Impossible to hurry through those teeming sidewalks. The pavement was intermittent; the street, plowed rubble. And how limply the City sprawled under the night; propped up with sticks and tin-sheets; gaudy with fresh paint;

festooned with colored lights; and screaming hysterically.

But his flesh thrilled, his eyes blurred to see all these people — crowding home, or to the shows and night clubs, or just ambling around; the soldiers and sailors bumping past in twos and threes linked arm in arm and roaring out a song — or boozing in the bars, or packed in front of shop-windows, or dancing bolsterously in the cabarets, or seated comatose on the curb; while the army cars thundered down the street, the MPs waving and whistling, and the shrill street boys combed through the crowd hawking eggs, cigarettes, beer, combs, watches, K-rations, Vick's pomade, GI clothes, fountain pens, mentholatum, matches, magazines, and all of post-war Manila's confusion of newspapers.

He loved it all — all the people and all the noise they made. He felt exultant. Be happy! He cried to them in his heart. We have come through! We are alive! We live!

Oh, nothing should mar, nothing spoil this fresh beginning, this new life, he thought, bumping now against a pavement-stall. For this was a new life, wasn't it? Not just a taking up where we left off when the Japanese came?

The shameful and shameless greed, frivolity, and hard-heartedness of the war years — people turned their eyes away from all that now, piously shuddering. Shocking, they agreed. But what could you expect? The War was to blame. The War and the Japanese. Everything — and everybody — had been so good before. But you know what war does to people, tch, tch. And so it's always because the war this and because the war that; because the Japanese this and because the Japanese that.

Oh, willfully blind, blind, blind!

As if the War had brought up anything new. As if the War had taught us anything we weren't past masters in. As if the War hadn't merely swollen to insanity the feverish, ferocious,

fear-haunted, hate-breeding money worship of the years before the War; the criminal greeds and cynical grafts that fester when the spirit rots. The War had merely bloated corruption that was already there.

I should know, he thought grimly, turning now into his own street. I was at all the wrong shrines, wasn't I? And seeing Newman's jeep parked at the curb, he thought of Pepang, of their marriage, of all the bitter brawls before the War, when they would come home in the small hours dead-tired, drunk and savagely disgusted with everything. They had become practically strangers to each other during the war years; himself off all day to all the big buy-and-sell sprees where the big money you made vanished quicker than you could count it, herself off to all the big mah-jong sprees where the big money you won melted faster than you could stack it.

And going up the garden-path, he thought of their children, their two boys, dead among the debris of that world. We made a wrong start, he thought, Pepang and I, and our children paid for it. An overwhelming sense of guilt had brought them together again, kept them together now. Not a very healthy emotion maybe. But we can start from there, can't we? Had already started, rather, he amended, going up the porch, stairs. For they were living very carefully now. Keeping away from the old crowd, renouncing the old frivolities. Not stepping out except to early Mass daily; and in the evenings, to take the air, the two of them, hand in hand and not talking much. Himself in denim pants, now, and walking home from a small steady job; Pepang washing dishes and not wearing her nails red like before . . . Oh-God in heaven, keep us trying! He prayed as he reached for the door knob. But the door opened and Doña Concha came out and closed the door behind her.

"Has something happened, mother?" he asked, startled by

the look on her face.

"Nothing. Except that our American is leaving."

"Oh, why?"

"I know nothing. Pepang came home alone. Something wrong with the jeep, she told me. The American has just arrived. How he frightened me, Eduardo, 'I'm getting the hell out of here!' he shouted at me when I opened the door to him. Then he stormed upstairs to get his clothes."

They heard the American coming down the stairs and lowered their voices.

"What does Pepang say?" asked Edong.

"To let him go at once and with no fuss. She does not intend to be present."

They heard the American inside put down his bag and strike a match.

"You need not see him either," said Doña Concha, worried. "I will say you have not arrived."

But her son-in-law had already pushed the door and entered.

Young Newman, freshly capped and uniformed, was standing at the foot of the stairs, lighting a cigarette. He did not look up as Edong approached.

"Leaving, Newman? Weren't you staying for the weekend?"

"Hi there, chap. No, I'm afraid I can't. One or two things I forgot about. Sorry."

He picked up his bag.

"But must you go at once? You haven't had supper, have you?"

"Skip it. I'm not hungry."

"Okay, Newman, I won't press you. But drop in again soon,

will you? The house is yours anytime you're in town. Of course, you write your grandfather?"

"Sometimes," replied the American, smiling at his cigarette.

"Well, give him my best wishes. Do you think he'll be coming here soon?"

"I don't know," said the American, still pondering his cigarette, his eyes hooded. "I don't know really. I'm not even sure he's coming back at all. But look here, guy, you shouldn't have gone through all this trouble of being so nice to me just so - I'd be sure to mention your name next time I wrote him."

Edong's face went blank.

"Because," continued the American, looking up, his voice curt, his eyes frosty. "I don't write my grandfather very often anyway, and next time I do, I'll be extra careful not to mention your name."

He flung the cigarette to the floor, trod on it, and moved to the door.

"That was pretty low, though," he added, pausing at the door, his hand on the knob, "throwing your wife at me like that. You don't want the job that bad, do you?"

He opened the door and stepped out.

Doña Concha, who was standing at the top of the porch stairs, looking out at the street, wheeled around.

"And you, señora," said the American, pausing to doff his cap, "you had no objections to having your daughter thus employed. Yours is a delightful family! How I regret I must leave so soon." When she turned her back on him, he cocked an eyebrow, shrugged and pulled on his cap. He said: "Adios, señora, and next time don't pick a New England Yankee. They've got the damnedest nose for a rat."

He strode down the porch stairs and up the garden-path, hopped into his jeep, and drove away.

Doña Concha hurried inside. Edong was still standing at the foot of the stairs. She started to say something nasty, changed her mind on seeing his face, and walked off to the kitchen.

Pepang was sitting on a stool beside the sink, peeling potatoes.

"Has he gone?" she asked as her mother entered.

Doña Concha was feeling furious but she noticed just the same that, since arriving, her daughter had brushed and rolled up her hair and that her lips and eyebrows were crisply and vividly defined.

"Perhaps," began the old woman, "You are now in the mood, Josefa, to explain what the devil that man was so offended about?"

"About nothing that is true," replied her daughter, dropping the last peeled potato into the bowl on the sink. Smiling smugly to herself, she laid down the knife and began gathering in a heap the peelings on her lap. "You see, mother —" she began, but seeing her husband enter she sprang up, scattering the peelings to the floor, ran to him and twined her arms around his neck. "Ed, darling," she whispered, brushing her lips along his cheek, "let's step out tonight."

"Step out? Where?"

"Anywhere. Night club or something."

"But what on earth for?"

She burst into laughter.

"Oh, Ed, Ed! We have changed!" And tweaking his nose: "Imagine you asking such a question! I want to go dancing, darling. Boy, do I feel like painting the town this red!" she cried,

flaunting her fingernails before his eyes.

* * *

Within a month, Pepang and Edong Camacho were looking, talking and behaving so much like their old prewar selves that one might wonder, as Doña Concha found herself almost wondering, if there had really been a war to interrupt them. It was presently even harder to recall the interlude of spiritual nakedness, of tears and heart-searching, when they had desired to hide themselves, inarticulate for once, and avoiding each other's eyes. Doña Concha could only conclude that the times discouraged normality. One had to be either in sackcloth and ashes, or painting the town red. And the lives of the many people who were soon infesting the house at all hours seemed to her a continual and violent propulsion between the extremes, equally hysterical, of penitence and whoopee. She could now ruefully recall having once hoped young Newman might shock Pepang and Edong back to life: he had proved too effective. And he had done something else. He had made Doña Concha feel old.

Upon being explained his behavior, she had felt incredulous; then, amused; then, rather touched; and finally, old.

That a total stranger should expect to be welcomed and loved strictly for himself alone — that was incredible. And funny. But, apparently, young Newman had so expected, and had held out against them from the first, suspecting beforehand that their welcome of him was not disinterested. But what welcome, what affection in this world is entirely disinterested? The most immolated nun still thinks of heaven when she thinks of God. Was this the absurdum of Yankee innocence? Certainly the rest of the world had long learned to take for granted that no prayer is pure piety, no kiss pure affection, no alms pure benevolence, and that even the noblest act of sacrifice is selfish somewhere.

Edong did say — and all of them did hope, being realists — that it might pay to be as nice as possible to old Newman's grandson. But that was not the sole reason, not even a principal one. They had tried to be as nice as possible chiefly because he was the grandson of an old friend of the family; and because he was a stranger in the land; and because he was an American; and because he was a soldier in the army that had liberated them and they wished to express their gratitude; and because they had become thoughtful through suffering and were feeling profoundly human for the first time in their lives.

That was not enough, of course. She had had experience of innocence and knew how stubbornly it refuses to bargain, to compromise, or (when the rest of us wink and bear it) to be cheated of a grain. And in her heart she knew it to be right. Impossible, yes, its dreams of perfect charity; impossible the people who measure reality by the dream. Impossible but not mistaken, though the reality of human relationships be a shameful traffic in profits. The realists took what they could get; the dreamers, demanding the true measure or nothing, the 'realists' always ended up with — the dropped crumbs of love that so quickly became ashes in the mouth . . . To be loved of the grown-up heart. And surely she had seen everything when a big full-grown man demanded to be accepted as one accepts a child!

All this made Doña Concha feel — for the first time in her sixty years — old

Not as old, however, as her son-in-law often felt now.

Edong Camacho had found easy the abrupt emotional about-face. It had only proved something he was always forgetting and learning afresh: that it was Pepang who set the pace of their lives and that he could stay sincere in a certain emotion only as long as she chose to share it with him. The

moment she refused to feel guilty anymore, the weight of the past vanished. Since there was no more past, you could do as you pleased. To do as you pleased, you had to know as many clever people as possible.

And yet, while acting the 'live wire' for all he was worth, he felt old. Though the past no longer weighed on the shoulders it was still around somewhere — outside peering in at windows; or lurking in corners and in the pauses of talk; or, in the morning, when you first opened your eyes, leaning over you, staring, and swiftly disappearing. And when people said how nice that they had started going around again and how brave they were and showed the right spirit not allowing what those monkeys did to ruin their lives but getting right up again to do business as usual and not moping at home with the blinds down and that private grief is rather selfish at times like these, don't you think? — or when he heard them say that yes, those were Pepang and Edong Camacho who lost both their children; and yes, thank God, they're back to normal now and have learned to be plucky about what happened like all of us and looking very much like their old selves, don't you think? — he felt violently nauseated and had to dig his fists into his pockets to keep from bashing their faces.

For these people meant by grief, mere vindictiveness; by courage, callousness; by business as usual, dirty business; and it was now they had gone mad, Pepang and himself, who recently were so sane and healthy, or, anyway, had had a chance to be really sad and healthy but had thrown the chance away and now were indeed "back to normal."

And he understood now the cold shock of guilt and shame that had paralyzed him on hearing young Newman's words of contempt and accusation. Hearing those words and knowing them to be false; knowing Newman to be wrong, to have

misunderstood, and that they had welcomed him because they felt it their duty and not because they had an axe to grind; knowing his conscience clear and his intentions innocent, he had yet known, at the same moment, with the same sureness, and with a paralyzing immediacy of guilt and shame, that the American spoke right and that somehow in some deep and obscure manner — simply by existing, perhaps, simply by being the sort of people they were — they had injured, they had insulted young Newman.

He did not tell Pepang this. He was afraid she would laugh and not understand. He was wrong. Pepang would have completely understood. And she would not have laughed. For this was how she had felt herself that afternoon in the graveyard. But by where Edong had been paralyzed cold, she had felt stung alive, blazing.

Besides, she was the sort of person who, on being accused of anything nasty, justly or not, promptly and gaily goes forth to provide the accusation with all the grounds it needed. If she was the scheming harlot the American thought her, then she was also a big hypocrite. The American had been wrong in his assumptions. But by the time she had finished making herself over to prove those assumptions correct she could no longer determine whether she had ever been sincere in her period of penitence.

Anyway, she had ceased to care. She had often been described as shallow, as liking only shallow people; an appraisal that succeeded in worrying her other days. Not now; not anymore. This first experience with a "deep one" was enough. She would never again care to go below. Now, as before, she would deal with people only on the surface, giving of herself and asking of them only the self we wear at parties, take to the movies, and generally offer to the public, because it is worthless,

easy to please, impossible to insult and completely superficial.

She was especially cautious with Americans, though the post-Newman varieties relieved her mind by being precisely what they looked like: desperately tired and homesick boys wanting to be amused. Still, she was taking no chances, and with even the most apparently inarticulate prepared herself against the possibility of a chasm exploding suddenly wide open where gun had stood before. Newman and herself were quits now, she would think at such moments, for as she feared, in each American, a lurking Newman, so he must have feared, in each Filipino, even before the dismal weekend, the Camachos lurking in ambush. And, she would mentally hoot, I bet he now keeps his wallet in an iron pouch — along with his virginity!

Which is unjust!

Newman's increased mail home, mostly because of the Camachos, can prove that their effect on him was not so elementary; was, possibly as racking as his effect on them.

There were (he wrote, in a letter to his mother) no signs they felt revolted by what they were doing. They were perfectly at ease. If I hadn't been so mean as to spoil their game, they would probably have patted themselves on the back afterwards for having been so hospitable and at the same time so provident.

And yet I keep feeling I was wrong somewhere. Maybe their ideas about honesty are not the same as ours, and how judge them at all in that case? Or maybe it's just because I'm an American. You can't imagine, Mom, how hard it is for Americans over here to get themselves taken for human beings. We're not just Tom, Dick, and Harry to them. We're the richest nation in the world. We're Packards, and Hollywood, and Camel cigarettes, and Harvard, and B-29's, and Sunkist oranges, and the Empire State Building. But we're not people. We're the happy hunting ground. We're the dollar sign made

flesh. And they can't think of us except in terms of the profits we mean to them. Maybe they're not really mercenary. But our being this rich and this lavish makes them so. We're afflicted with something like that curse on Midas: we corrupt what we touch.

Look how far I've traveled again from the Camachos. Trouble is whenever I start on that family I find myself digging up everything I ever thought and everything that ever happened to me as if to justify how I acted. I feel there was something about them I missed. I was too busy at the time playing detective and looking sardonic. But I surely figured them wrong somewhere because now when I try to put them together the way they should go if I was right, the pieces don't fit. It worries me . . .

Newman had evidently gone on worrying: a month later he was writing his mother again on the subject.

I can't sleep (he wrote). I keep seeing that girl's face, and her husband's. I can't begin to imagine the enormity of what I did, supposing I was wrong. And something tells me I was. Those people did want to be nice. And simply because they were nice people. They wanted to like me, wanted me to like them. And I brushed off their attempts at friendship. I flung their hospitality in their faces. I messed up everything with all my damnable suspicions, dratted cuss that I am. And it's such a hopeless circle, Mom. First you botch all relations with other people by being so difficult and wary, then you worry yourself to death wondering if you hurt somebody. Yes, I know, I wouldn't have all those Puritan ancestors if I didn't worry. But remember how I boasted it would be me riding them and not them riding me? I was so confident, wasn't I? I could make fun of all the Yankee Marco Polos that went everywhere, saw nothing, and understood less. I laughed at you when you told me about your running away to New York and Art, and then to Paris and more Art, and finally giving up and coming back to Temperance, New Hampshire,

because anyway that was where you had always been. Well, it's your turn to laugh now, Mom. I'm coming home on the same boat myself. I never left home, either. And me telling that girl about the attic and how when I came home the things won't be strange anymore. No wonder she called me batty. But now that we're back to those people, what do I do about them? For either I do something — and quick — or I burst. No use warning me to think it over some more. I'll have to see them again soon. And crawl . . .

* * *

So, about four months after his first encounter with the Camachos, Doña Concha burst into her daughter's room and announced that 'the American' had come back.

"Which one?" asked Pepang. She was sitting on the bed in her chemise, polishing her nails, and she went right on polishing them.

"Which one?" echoed Doña Concha, blankly. "Why, the first one of course. The Newman. Old Andrew's grandson."

Pepang looked up, her mouth open.

"Newman!" And her husband coming in from the bathroom at that moment, rubbing his hair in a towel: "Do you hear that, Ed? Young Newman has come back . . . Where is he, mother? What did he say?"

"I have not yet talked with him. He is waiting downstairs. The maid let him in and told me. But I saw him arrive. I was in my room looking out the window."

"My God!" moaned Edong, collapsing on a chair. "But why has he come again?"

Doña Concha threw him and her daughter a scornful glance. She said: "The man has, of course, come back to apologize."

"Apologize!" gasped Pepang and Edong together.

"Naturally," said Doña Concha, "having realized his offense. He brings flowers and a box. Of candy, perhaps. Oh, the boy shows himself of a good heart. He is not above confessing an error and begging for pardon."

"But he must not do any such thing!" cried Pepang, rising trembling slightly, brush in hand.

"Oh, God, no!" groaned Edong, rising too, and flinging the towel away.

"But why not?" demanded Doña Concha. "Why not, if he wants to, if he feels a need for it? It would make him feel good."

"Only for the moment," said Pepang bitterly, dropping the brush on the bed and pressing her palms against her cheeks. "It would only make him hate us more."

"But this is your own heart that you let speak for him!" taunted her mother.

"You assume too much, Josefa, that the man would react as you would. But perhaps he possesses a conscience. Perhaps he understands the dignity of penitence and of the desire to be forgiven. And you yourself, a few months ago, when you were still in your senses, even you would have understood such a desire; you would have respected it; you would not have babbled all this about hate and shame and disgust."

Pepang listened, quite still, her palms pressed against her cheeks, her eyelids faintly flickering. Then, she looked at her husband. Edong was standing still too, staring at his feet. She knew he could feel her looking at him but would not lift his eyes. She smiled — her smug, crafty smile — picked up the brush, sat down on the bed, and, briskly resumed the polishing of her nails said:

"Listen, mother: you too, Ed. Why all this holy solemnity? This boy, when he first came here, had a very unpleasant time.

Through no fault of ours, yes. But still he suffered. We are all agreed, I suppose, that he is to suffer no further unpleasantness in this house if we can prevent it. And whatever you say, mother, having to apologize is a highly unpleasant business. Just because we bear him a grudge is no —"

"I bear him no grudge!" interrupted her mother.

"Very well, you bear him no grudge. All of us bear him no grudge. Then, why make him go through such a painful comedy at all?"

"Certain formalities," promptly answered her mother, "are established and must be respected. Oh, we made a grave mistake the first time in not standing fast by convention. You went out alone with him and what conclusion did he draw? Now, we must stand rigid. He is in Rome, he must do as the Romans."

"We are to butcher him then," smiled Pepang, "to provide Rome a holiday? I thought you bore him no grudge, mother! No, no. The tactful, the truly polite thing to do is to ignore what happened previously and —"

"You do not cancel the past," broke in her mother, "simply by ignoring it."

"Perhaps not. But, anyway, we can pretend to ourselves that we are meeting him for the —"

"If he is not to apologize to me," again interrupted Doña Concha, "I will not see him."

Rising to put an end to all this nonsense, and crossing to her dressing table, Pepang said, firmly: "He is not to apologize to anybody and you need not see him, mother."

"I refuse to see him!" the old woman corrected her, sweeping furiously out of the room.

"And now to get dressed," breathed Pepang, springing to action; and as she hurried into her frock: "Whatever are you waiting for Ed? That boy has been sweating it out, you know, while we blabbed . . . Come on, get up; you're sitting on my stockings. And will you please omit the misery from your face? You're not going to be difficult, too, are you?"

"I only want to know," said her husband, rising reluctantly, "how we are to act towards him if he is not to apologize."

Pepang groaned.

"We act," she patiently explained, as she pulled on the stockings, "exactly as if he were any other American. You should know the routine by now. Only, we talk louder, funnier, and we hog the conversation. Give him as few openings as possible. Especially when it looks as if he wanted to bring up what happened. That's absolutely taboo. So, clap down quick. As far as we're concerned we are seeing him for the first time. Though heaven save me from anything like that first one! . . . Funny how long ago it seems now. Ages, really . . . Oh, well, I guess it's all part of one's education. Throw me my shoes, will you?"

* * *

When Pepang came down, young Newman was sitting in the parlor, holding a bunch of flowers and a box on his lap. He stood up to greet her and she immediately asked him to sit down again; told him how nice he was looking; asked him, as she sat down beside him on the sofa, if he didn't find this sudden heat spell killing; laughingly deplored how she looked and hoped he would excuse her and said she practically lived in the bathroom these days; which reminded her of Bouganville and all those places and was it true they did nothing but take showers out in the rain and how about the women there and how awful and did he know a certain McCoy, a Jimmy McCoy of the 37th, and she

began to tell him a very funny story about this guy when he was still in Brooklyn.

When Edong came in bearing a tray of drinks, Newman stood up, again but they made him sit down and Edong said didn't he find it a hell of a climate and that he had the medicine for that right here and what poison did Newman prefer and Pepang laughed and hoped he wasn't on any sort of wagon and Edong passed the glasses around and declared that no wagons of any sort were allowed in the City because of the military traffic. Then they spent four minutes arguing whom to toast and Pepang said Yamashita certainly deserved toasting but Edong said the devil was going to take care of that and they finally just tossed down the drinks without toasting anybody and Edong filled the glasses again and lighted cigarettes for everybody while Pepang resumed her story about Jimmy McCoy and somehow managed to get Newman to rid his lap of the embarrassingly conspicuous box and flowers without mentioning them.

Before this combined onslaught of the Camachos, Newman at first seemed rather startled; then, increasingly mystified. He strove, now and then, to break through the barrage, but the Camachos were vigilant on all sides, blocking him in. He seemed to give up finally: his wondering face went blank. When, after a while, that blankness twisted itself into the sardonic expression he had worn with such relish the first time, Pepang, honestly surprised (she had not expected to produce this particular effect), stumbled for a moment and floundered about in her talk. The next moment, however, she was up and herself again. The hell with it. Why should she worry? It was a relief rather. And she signalled Edong that the point of greater danger was past: they could relax.

Edong promptly slumped in his chair, glass in hand, and grinned savagely. Each time his eyes chanced to meet the American's, his belly heaved and water sourly swelled in his

mouth.

When Newman finally rose to leave, Edong noticed that he did not offer to shake hands, and thought: I'll be damned if I get up. He contented himself with merely bobbing his head and grinning. But the box and the flowers still lay on the sofa and Newman seemed unable to go without disposing of them. Pepang solved that one by picking up the flowers herself.

"For me? How nice of you, Joe. They're lovely. what's in the box?"

"Candy," replied Newman; and as they moved to the door: "But why Joe? You know my name."

"All Americans are Joe to me," drawled Pepang as they stepped out to the porch.

"Don't you try to distinguish?"

"Uh-uh. I stopped trying, long ago. . . . Well, goodbye again — Joe. Take extra good care of yourself. You're going home, you know. No more boozing, no more late hours. Have a pleasant voyage. And try not to think evil of us."

The American hesitated on the porch stairs.

"I did, you know, the first time," he finally blurted out.

Pepang felt her heart lose a beat but managed to say at once, lightly: "And now you've found out you were mistaken?"

"I've found out," said the American, looking her in the eye, "that I was not mistaken after all."

And that, mused Pepang when the jeep had driven away, is what I get for being so damn considerate.

She marched into the house, dumped the flowers in one chair and herself on another, and asked Edong to pour her a stiff one.

"That was the cruelest thing I ever did," he moaned as he handed her the glass.

She said: "Please. Nobody found it a picnic," and gulped down the drink.

"Your mother was right," pursued Edong, looking miserable. "We should have let him apologize."

"Okay, okay! We were wrong again. But we were only trying to spare him a lousy time, weren't we? What's wrong about that, I'd like to know."

"Us!" cried Edong savagely. "Ourselves! What we are!"

"Oh, you make me sick. You and your eternal breast-beating."

"We weren't trying to save him a lousy time. We were trying to save ourselves a lousy time. We knew we would have suffered like hell to have him apologize to us. And why, sweetheart, why? Because we know we're worthless; because we know we're corrupt; because we know we're —"

"I do not!" snapped Pepang. "Will you stop howling nonsense?"

"What do you want me to do? Sing the praises of what we are? Extol my cowardice? Extol your bitchiness?"

"You can stop screaming, that's what you can do!" screamed Pepang, rising and hurling the glass in his face.

And Doña Concha, upstairs in her room saying her beads, jumped up to hear the screams and the glass breaking. It has happened at last, she told herself. This was the couple's first fight since their resumption of the normal life. She had felt it coming a long time. And the American who had marked off one phase in their lives now marked the end of another. The period of readjustment was over. Pepang and Edong were now completely back to normal.

And if to be mad was not to be normal, thought Doña

Concha, sitting down and resuming her beads, then it was futile indeed to preach moderation, and too late for moderate cures. The pattern of society, mutilated by war as it was, had better be pulled loose altogether. How now invoke the ties that bind men when all human intercourse was an infection? A plague was abroad and a plague calls for quarantine. Herded together men rotted each other; apart, their own loneliness might heal and purify them. It was time again, thought Doña Concha, for the call of the ascetic and the cave of the anchoite. Time again for harsh hermits to lead the populace out of the cities and to disperse them among the wastes of the desert. Thus had the world saved itself once from the violence of its own disgust with itself. Disciplined and rejuvenated by solitude, tears, fasting, silence and wrestling with devils, it had emerged to discover, with awkward awe and astonishment, the green of the leaves and the joy of human companionship. Had emerged to discover and to adore salvation as a Woman (whether virgin or mother) and, enthroned in her arms, Deity as a child. How long before the world would be fit again to make that discovery? wondered Doña Concha, hearing another glass break, downstairs, and Pepang shrieking. It would take a long time, she feared, considering that the world had fallen so low there were no more women these days. No more women and no more children, grimly concluded Doña Concha, rising and going off to fetch ammonia and mercurochrome.

As for young Andrew Newman, one would have thought this final encounter would mean something really final. But, with a New England Yankee, one apparently never touches bottom. For, in the last letter he was to write his mother before embarking, and in the middle of such an important announcement as the precise date on which he expected to arrive in Temperance, New Hampshire, he was to jolt that former Paris expatriate by abruptly breaking off and resuming on the

Camachos.

You never know (he wrote) just what you expect people to do a certain moment until the moment occurs and they don't do it. I think it funny now to have brought along candy and flowers but only because I have realized that, after how I acted the other time, if I ever dared show up again they would naturally (if they were really innocent) and promptly have done certain things — like slapping my face, breaking my neck, and throwing me out the window. When they came down instead with grins a mile wide and started trying to get me all hot and confused by giving me the 50-caliber talk-stuff and winking at each other all the time — why, I started smelling that rat again, all the way from Denmark . . .

It's a strange thing all right, to be an American. But maybe it's just as strange and difficult to be other people. Trouble is we Americans act as if we owned a patent on strangeness. We sow any number of things that must annoy and flabbergast other people and we do them as if it were our duty to annoy and flabbergast others. But we don't like to find other people's actions annoying or flabbergasting in any way. We take for granted that anybody that's civilized at all and smart acts like an American. It will surely take a lot of time, goodwill and labor before no people are strange to other peoples and nobody's a foreigner anywhere. We Americans don't exactly hasten the process by being so awe-struck by the strangeness of us.

You will gather from all this that my mind's not yet at ease about the Camachos. It isn't. I still think I was wrong somewhere, that there was some vital item I missed. I feel now that they were struggling to reach over to where I was but had to grope and grope because, as usual, I had sullenly turned off the lights too soon. And yes, Mom, it worries me . . .

J. C. Dionisio

A Summer in an Alaskan Salmon Cannery

"Big Mistake" nervously paced the mess-house floor. Around him were gathered the men — towels and toothbrushes still in hand. There was a tense apprehension in the air. It was 5:20 o'clock, and in ten minutes the bull cook would beat the gong. Breakfast.

We all blessed that gong when it sounded at noon and at six o'clock in the evening. But everybody cursed it at five o'clock in the morning. For its devilish sound pierced your ears no matter how deep under the covers you buried your head. And when you have stood for eighteen hours in the cold, slimy fish house, you'd wish to God you were out alone on a lonely island where there were no bosses nor gongs to break your sweet dreamless sleep.

But we were not gathered there that morning to protest against the gong. It was bad enough, but we knew it was necessary. After all, they had to wake us up: we were not paid to sleep. We were gathered there because the previous day we had lodged a complaint with the boss against the Chinese cook. We let it be known that as human beings we could not stand working from six in the morning to twelve at night and be given

hard rice and salted salmon for breakfast. We simply could not eat the stuff. We demanded coffee — and no salt salmon.

The cook was apparently in sympathy with us. We could understand his position well enough, but by some queer twist of human nature we blamed our lot on him. He was a Chinese and the contractor was his countryman. When Big Mistake as undelegated leader of the gang appraised him of our demand, he said absently, "I no know. You ashee boshee."

Our Filipino foreman was a middle-aged person who had been handling cannery crews for some fifteen years. He had an unusually flat nose, and his eyes closed and opened incessantly while he talked. He had a hard mouth and his face was lightly pockmarked. He seemed amiable enough, but he sided too much with the Chinese. We didn't think that was right.

Anyway, when "Big Mistake" approached him one morning, Louie — that was his name — anticipated him, bellowing threateningly: "I know what you want, 'Big Mistake.' You want to complain about the chow. What do you think this is — a restaurant? a chop suey house? Why'd you come to Alaska — for a vacation? Huh!"

That night the conspiracy was hatched. We greenhorns were scared but were spurred on by the hardened oldtimers. "The only way we can get our rights around this dump," "Big Mistake" murmured to us as we huddled in our bunks, "is to tell them where to get off. Vacation — huh!"

If the bull cook sensed something wrong that morning, he did not show it. To be sure, he looked astonished as he saw the whole crew of a hundred twenty men seated at their tables at 5:28. "Wassa malla?" he said. "Allo come down oierly today."

Ah Shi, the cook, in badly soiled denim overalls, leaned out of the kitchen window and shouted, "Kan kang loh!" The bull

cook banged the iron bar. We grabbed our chopsticks and proceeded to eat.

Conversation was unusually dull, but the idle chatter and the noise of the chopsticks belied the tension among us. Then suddenly a voice shrilled. "Hee-ee-eep!" Simultaneously the basins containing the rice were flopped upside down on the tables, the chopstick described arches in the air, and salt salmon and dried cabbages littered the floor.

Pandemonium reigned. A party raided the kitchen, and half of the crew was munching cupcakes, apple pies, and jelly rolls. Ah Shi ran to the cottage which served as our foreman's quarters, shouting despairingly, "Louie-ah! Louie-ah!" But Louie had already gone to the cannery.

The Chinese had barricaded themselves in their quarters. Ah Shi ran there, pounding frantically on the door. It opened a little and a hand pulled him in; but before he was entirely inside, a piece of pie, perfectly aimed, landed on his back. The volume of laughter increased. We were having a grand time.

When we came home at noon, there was a sign on the bulletin board. It read: "Anyone caught dumping food on the tables or on the floor will be shipped back to Seattle." We looked at each other, amused. We knew that was a scare. They wouldn't dare send anyone back. It was the peak of the season and they were short of men.

We noticed also an improvement in our menu. More meat was mixed with the dried cabbage. We had fried fresh salmon. "Big Mistake" beamed triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you?" he said. "Uh, huh!" I exulted. "So they won't give us salt salmon anymore!"

Pete, our "retort boy," who had a genius for reticence, gulped down his soup. "They couldn't," he said simply.

marveling at my innocence. "We threw the stuff in the creek!"

II

Joe was a gambler. He was also rumored to be a gangster. He was "a tough egg." The men were not wont to befriend him. They said they felt "clammy" when he was near. His eyes slanted just a little, giving him the appearance of a half-breed Chinese. But he had no Chinese blood in him.

It was whispered that Joe had bullet and knife wounds in his body. It was also whispered that he had killed a rival in love in his home town in the islands, and that he had come to the U.S. to escape punishment. I didn't know whether the rumors were true, but I did know he was once an inmate of San Quentin Prison in California. He told me so himself. Of the circumstances he didn't tell me.

Joe had a mercurial temperament. Easily provoked, he struck in a flash. But he was not a bully. He did not pick quarrels unless he was abused. Also, he had a redeeming sense of humor. He delighted in telling jokes — sometimes dirty, sometimes perfectly innocuous.

One afternoon — this was yet early in the season and the work was only a few hours a day — Joe was playing blackjack with the bunch. "Bulutong" Mac was the banker. (There was nothing unusual about Mac, except that despite his homely appearance, he was the only man in the bunch who had attracted the attention of Harriet, a winsome young Minnehaha). Anyway, Joe had the highest bet — twenty-five dollars. He had a couple of jacks in his hand. Mac had a seven up. Mac thought for a moment, then deftly, swiftly, he drew a card. A five. In a flash Joe's right shot out, and in its grasp gleamed a menacing eight-inch automatic knife.

Mac rolled to the floor, jumped up, and ran. Joe followed him a few paces, turned around and darted up to his room. We were all so stunned by the suddenness of it that we stood there, our mouths agape.

Presently Joe came down, a .45 caliber gun in his hand. He was shaking with rage. But Mac was nowhere to be found. Joe ran outside. Shots rang out. We crowded in the doorway, fearful that the worst had happened. And we saw. There on the walk stood Joe — in his hand a smoking revolver, and twenty paces away lay an empty salmon can riddled with bullets!

Late that night Big Boy and I were watching the "hook fish" gang unloading the fish from the scows when Shorty Alston came running up to us, gesturing wildly. "Come on," he panted. "Mac's fighting Indian! Mac's fighting . . . hun . . . hun . . . Indian!"

We scrambled after him. Big Boy muttered under his breath, "The damn fool! He should have known this is Saturday night. He should have kept away from that crazy girl. The boss has warned him."

"There they are!" pointed Shorty. And there they were, but they were three. Two were Filipinos. The girl apparently had taken to her heels at the first sign of hostilities.

Joe and Mac were giving the brave a bad beating. But he was fighting. Suddenly a right uppercut from Joe caught the native on the jaw. He reeled, sagged, and fell to the boardwalk. Walking over to Mac, Joe grabbed him by the shoulders and without warning shot a similar uppercut to his chin which knocked him completely out. "You lousy skunk!" he swore at Mac as he dragged him home. "You'd get into a fight over a lousy girl like that!"

And from that night on Joe and Mac were real friends. They

slept in the same hotel room in Seattle and tramped together to California. I have not heard of them since.

III

Among the collegiate element in the crew was a handsome young man named Licerio. For the sake of expediency we called him, incongruously enough, Lizzy.

Lizzy belonged to an influential family in the islands. His father held an important political post in his province. But Lizzy, like Hardy's reddenmen, relinquished his better position in life for want of an interest in it. His father wanted him to be a lawyer, but Lizzy wanted to be a "sailor on a tramp steamer." Then discovered one day in a compromising situation with a young lady acquaintance whom he did not love, he "hotfooted it to America to escape the impending doom of inevitable marriage."

In America he developed a condescending democratic attitude towards his fellows. Fundamentally he was an aristocrat — as the term is understood in the Philippines. He was easily identified with the elevated-nose contingent. He had, however, a charm all his own. His careful speech, erect bearing, affable manners, and a certain subtle suavity suggested good breeding.

Lizzy regarded the natives (Alaskan Indians) as far below him. He didn't have anything to do with them. He worked in the warehouse with the girls. His job was to pile up the "coolers" or metal trays as soon as the girls emptied them of their salmon contents. He stood in one corner and waited for them to be emptied. He didn't even condescend to speak with the girls, and scoffed at their flirtations.

Then one day we saw him carrying some kindling for Esther. An act of chivalry, we thought. . . . But we were wrong. It was love — at least he said so. The knowing ones said it was sheer

midsummer madness.

The affair continued all summer. Nobody paid any particular attention. Summer romances like that flared up, then evaporated. Nothing unusual in the canneries. Nothing unusual to the native girls who were unknowing advocates of free love. But Lizzy was getting serious. Bad. One evening while we were preparing to go back to Seattle he came up to me and said, "I think I'm going to marry Esther."

"You're what!" I was so surprised I nearly choked on the piece of apple I was eating.

"Well," he said with a naiveté that was devastating, "What's wrong with that? She's used to elemental living, and I won't have to slave to keep her. Besides, we love each other — There she is now: I'm going to speak to her." And he ran out.

That night when he came home, he dropped on his bunk, grunting heavily. I stuck my head out of the covers and inquired, "Well, did she say yes?"

Lizzy didn't look up. "You know," he said, "there are lots of things in this world which you can't take for granted. Take Esther. When I told her I wanted to marry her, she looked at me kind of surprised and said, 'Now you're getting serious. Don't, because I won't like you if you do . . . Let's just be like we are now. After all, we're happy while it lasts. You go your way and I'll go mine. Then we'll remember each other — live in sweet memories.' That's all. And she kissed me and ran away. And after all we've done —"

"Never mind that," I interrupted. "You'll forget her when you get back down below."

"Forget her? Believe me or don't, you'll never see me in Alaska again."

And I never did.

Gilda Cordero Fernando

People in the War

Our front door opened right into the sidewalk, and the street sloped down to a lily-dappled river, in our house in the city. Across the river a soap opera was always taking place: A man with two wives lived in an unpainted house beside the lumber mill. When the sun went down the wives began to quarrel, clouting each other with wooden clogs, and a bundle of clean wash came flying out of the window into the silt below. We watched them chase each other down the stairs, clawing each other's clothes off and rolling down the embankment, and the dogs of the neighborhood surrounded them, barking, snarling — till from the lumber mill the husband emerged — a shirtless apparition with a lumber saw in his hand.

At least once a month they held a wake on the river bank. They rented a corpse, strung up colored lights and gambled till the wee hours of the morning. Sometimes a policeman wandered in — having heard some rumor, and poked around with his night stick. But there would be the corpse, and it was truly dead, there would be the card games, but no suspicion of betting (the chips having been scooped away together with the basket of money) and the policeman would saunter away.

wiping a tear, leaving the poor relatives to their grief and their gambling.

We must move to another neighborhood, my father said everyday. We planted trees to screen them from sight, we planted trees to preserve our respectability. A truck unloaded two acacia trees on our doorstep, saplings no bigger than I. The houseboy made a bamboo fence around their trunks and every afternoon the maids hauled out pails to water them.

Soon the trees grew tall and lush with yellow-green leaves and the crickets sang in them. Then the street boys shook them down for bugs and crickets, or stripped off the bark with pen knives or swung on the branches till they snapped. My father waged an indefatigable battle with the street boys for why should they want to destroy beautiful things? He was terribly good with a slingshot and seldom missed his target — for ammunition he used a round clay pellet instead of a stone and made a painful red mark. In time my father just had to lean out the window and the boys scampered down the trees, and after a while they learned to leave the trees alone.

The soft dappled shade served many purposes. The branches sheltered a group of nursery school children with sausage curls whose playground had been turned during the Occupation into a garrison. In the afternoon, a Japanese girl named Sato-san came to air a nephew and a niece and lay out rice cakes under the spreading trees. She was a masseuse in the Japanese barbershop at the corner which was always brilliant with neons and sweet with the odor of Bay Rum. Occasionally, a dispossessed family of tattered jugglers did their act in the shade of the acacias. They laid a dirty tarpaulin on the ground and tumbled in it, juggling wooden balls and bottles. Then the father stood on a barrel and balanced his two daughters on his shoulders and it was the most daring, most brilliant finale I had

ever seen. As they made their bows, an indifferent crowd dropped a coin or two into the man's soiled hat, and once I saw someone drop in a rotten mango.

Our driver now turned houseboy (our Plymouth had been commandeered) hailed from a pot-making region and he would come from vacation with a tobacco box full of hard clay pellets baked in the sun, for my father's slingshot — a year's supply till the next vacation. My father had a low opinion of the Imperial Army. When I showed him my report card, he thundered. What do you mean 75 in Algebra, 95 in Nippongo! Am I raising a little geisha?

Oh yes, one night he almost got into real trouble with that slingshot. A drunken Japanese officer was kicking noisily on the door of the family living downstairs, calling the young girl's name amorously and growling like a jungle ape. Annoyed, my father flung back the bed sheets and charged to the window with his slingshot. Mother tried to pull him back, but already father had aimed and hit — right in the seat of the olive drab pants. It was blackout and the man was at a disadvantage — flattened behind the window, his treacherous opponent let loose another hail of pellets. With a horrible war cry, the soldier unsheathed his sword, a grim Samurai brandishing reprisal in the air. Mother and I cowered in our nightgowns and embraced each other. Whenever the officer's drink-clouded eyes looked up at our direction, my father shot at him from another window. Finally, he stumbled away, his hobnailed boots echoing in the deserted midnight street. We half-expected the Imperial army to storm our door the next morning. But they never came, I guess the officer was too drunk to remember it.

After a while our curtain of trees became useless. The people on the other side of the river raised a contribution to build a bamboo bridge across it and the bad elements started coming

into town. It was a narrow, split-bamboo bridge that swayed, and the Japanese soldiers loved to walk on it.

As the beggars with coconut shells in their palms increased in numbers, it became a usual thing to find a bloated corpse under a newspaper. Everyone was suddenly interested in food production: twin curly-haired young men from across the river began to cultivate the ground surrounding the acacias. From two o'clock until sundown they puttered among the neat plots, loosening the soil around the flourishing yams and *talinum* buds, fetching water in cans, collecting fertilizer from under the *dokars* parked in the street. Aquilino was the leaner, handsomer twin, he was my brown god in an undershirt, reeking of sweat and fertilizer; but when Santos knocked on our door with a basket of *talinum* tops for Mother, I couldn't decide whom I liked better. When the jasmine climbing from our window box was replaced with the more practical *ampalaya*, I carved their names on the fruit, and the letters grew as the fruit grew: Santos and Aquilino.

II

The Spanish family renting the downstairs portion of our house opened a small laundry but retained their fierce pride. The women sat behind the unpainted counter in their bedraggled *kimonas*, like soiled aristocracy, handling the starched pants drying on the wire hangers with pale finicky fingers. They pretended to understand nothing but Spanish and a customer's every Tagalog word sent them huddling together in consultation. If you were overtaken there by lunchtime, in the kitchen Señora Bandana placed a wet rag on her hot frying pan. The daughter then came out and said wheedlingly, *Cena tu ya aqui*, having made you believe, by the fabulous sizzle that there was a chicken or at least a milkfish in the pan. Since it was unthinkable to stay over for a meal during those hard times, you left with

thanks and profuse apologies. The family then commenced on its meal of rice and bagoong, smugly sitting on their reputations.

They had been paying ₱15 a month before the war and insisted on paying the same rent in Japanese money. My father continually begged them to leave so we could take in boarders, but whenever he brought up the subject, Señora Bandana had one of her heart attacks. Finally, they compromised by giving us back two rooms which we needed for Mr. Solomon and Boni.

Boni was a fourth cousin from Batangas on my mother's side. He had gotten stranded in Manila when the schools closed and came to live with us because he found it easier to make money in the city, on buy-and-sell. He always had some business or another: He had converted an old German bicycle into a commercial tricycle and rented it to a man every morning. He also dealt in wooden shoes, *muscovado*, agar-agar and cotton batting for auto seats. On father's birthday, Boni presented him with a skeletal radio he had tinkered with, that could catch the Voice of Freedom and it pleased my father no end. Once Boni bought three truckfuls of bananas wholesale — our garage was so full of them there was hardly any space to walk. That venture had been a fiasco — before he could resell the lot, half of them rotted away while he was at a dance in Paranaque.

Boni was an expert *balisong* wielder. He could hit a coin four feet away, the knife making a clean hole in the center of it. He also had a bad habit of throwing the knife at cockroaches and lizards and cutting them to ribbons. Once he threw it at a stray cat that was annoying him below his window and my mother almost had a fit. Send him away, my mother told my father over the *tulya* broth. Make him go home to the province. My father took the knife away and told Boni to behave. Boni's father was an unbeliever, and when he died, which was three years before the war, he asked the family to erect a devil on his gravestone.

And there it still stands in the cemetery in Batangas, regal and black, its tail long and sharp as an arrow, its eyeballs and armpits a fiery red, lording it over all the weeping angels and white crosses. On All Saints' Day Boni alone came to visit the grave to cut away the weeds and repaint the devil a deep glossy black.

Mr. Solomon occupied what had been Señora Bandana's sala. He hung up his crucifix and his hat and locked the door and never opened it again. Mr. Solomon owned vast salt beds in Bulacan and his dream was to control the salt market in Manila. Just before the war he was competing even with the Chinese merchants and whatever price he dictated the merchants had to follow. In the great salt war there was a time when salt was selling for ten centavos a sack.

His four sons joined Marking's Guerillas after the fall of Bataan, and Mr. Solomon became its heaviest contributor. The Japanese had seized his salt beds and when he became the *kenpeitai's* most hunted man, he begged my papa, who was his old friend, to hide him and that was why he was boarding with us.

Mr. Solomon stayed all day in Señora Bandana's sala, gazing out the window saying nothing. He listened to the nursery school children singing; he watched Sato-san air her nephews and nieces; he dropped coins into the juggler's hat. But we had to pass his food down a wobbly dumb-waiter. My brother Raul and I complained whenever we were assigned to deliver the food, especially if there was hot soup, but Mother said to be patient with Mr. Solomon as he was a man who had 'gone through the fire of suffering.' The only time Mr. Solomon ever went out of his room was when he offered to show Papa how to make ham. After rubbing the fresh pig's thigh with salt, he brought out a syringe and shot the red meat full of salt-peter and other preservatives. Then he wrapped it in a cloth and told

Mama to keep it in the ice box for three months. Mama said Mr. Solomon was probably getting tired of eating fish.

When Eden and Lina came to stay with us, I gave up my room to sleep with Mother. They were home-loving sisters who made my room look nice with printed curtains and put crotcheted covers on the beds. Under the bed they had many boxes of canned goods, mostly milk for Eden's baby. A basket lined with diapers was hung from the rafters and the baby slept in it.

Eden and Lina's father was Papa's brother and they used to live in Cabanatuan where they had a rice mill. As children, we used to play baseball on the area of cement beside the granary where the palay was spread out to dry, during our vacations in the province before the war. Their mother ran a restaurant called "Eden's Refreshment" where she served a thick special *dinuguan* smiling right from an earthen pot. Tia Candeng had a fault—she played favorites. It was always 'Eden is pretty, Eden is valedictorian. My child Eden . . . ' Never Lina. Lina ran around in ragged slacks and played *cara y cruz* with the mill hands. On Eden's eighteenth birthday they rented the roof garden of the *municipio* and held a big dance. Her dress was ordered from Manila and cost three hundred fifty pesos. The town beautician worked all day putting pomade and padded hair in her pompadour. They sent us an 8" x 10" photograph of Eden on her debut with a painted waterfall in the background.

After that, a rich widower used to motor all the way from Tarlac to visit Eden. An engineer also fell in love with her and lavished the family with *bangus* from their fishpond. When the charcoal-fed Hudson and Ford stopped by their gate, Tia Candeng, all a-flutter brought out from her stock of pre-war goods precious hot dogs to fry and serve to the rivals. But one day a small squat soldier without a job blew into town and Eden

ran away with him. He was a mere lieutenant and a second one at that, and Tia Candeng never forgave them. They came to the city to live, in a muddy crooked street. Minggoy and Eden had violent quarrels. Whenever they did, Eden bundled her cake pans and pillows and mats and photo albums and the week-old baby and stayed with us for a few days. In the latter part of the Occupation, her husband joined the guerillas and Eden came to live with us permanently.

Lina came later. Her stringiness had blossomed into a willowy kind of slenderness and she had her mother's knack for housekeeping. But she was of a nervous temperament. Continually, she wove "macrame" bags of abaca twine in readiness for the day when we would be fleeing the bombs. She had also fashioned a wide inner garment belt of unbleached cotton, with numerous secret pockets.

III

My brother's room was the largest in the house, it was the size of the sala and the dining room together because in the good old days it had been a billiard room. It let out to an azotea and had a piano in it. His friends, Celso, Paquito and Nonong were always in Raul's room for they were trying to put out an ambitious book of poems. Celso's father had an old printing press, rusty from disuse, and they lugged it up to the room and were always tinkering with it, trying to make it work. Boni offered them a price for the scrap metal, and they threw an avalanche of books at him.

The piano had been won by an uncle of Nonong, who was timbre-deaf, from a raffle. This uncle was so timbre-deaf in fact that the only tune he could tell from another was the National Anthem, because everyone stood up when it was played. All he had to spend for was the ticket and the transportation, and on Nonong's birthday the beautiful second-hand Steinway was

presented to him instead of the books he wanted. Nonong's room was too small for the piano, and so of course it ended up in Raul's room. Mother never objected to the boys lugging things into the house just as long as they never lugged things out.

Sometimes they stuck a candle in a bottle and my brother Raul read the Bible deep into the night. They called me their muse and allowed me to listen to their poems for I had read Dickinson and Marlowe and of course that made me an authority, and besides I was always good for a plateful of cookies or to fetch an extra chair. Paquito could play "Stardust" on the Steinway and Cels could do a rib-splitting pantomime, but best of all I liked Nonong although he couldn't do anything. Nonong gave me a Ticonderoga pencil he had saved all the way from before the war — it was stuck on a painted card where you could read your fortune. On Christmas I gave him a handkerchief embroidered with his initials in blue thread.

Nonong was always trying to make an intellectual out of me. The few books I read — *Les Miserables*, *Rosahomon*, *Graustark* and *Inside Africa* — were all from him. I ransacked my father's trunk of books for something to present him in return and came up with the fourth volume of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, from *John the Baptist* to *Leghorn*.

I have read a lot of authors, Nonong used to say teasing me, but best of anything I've read I like the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, from *John the Baptist* to *Leghorn*.

Once, after a visit to a friend's house, Raul couldn't fetch me and my mother telephoned. Don't go home alone. Nonong is here. I will send him over to fetch you. We walked down the avenue laughing under the unlighted street lamps, the carretelas and tricycles zigzagging past us.

Let's drop by your office, Nonong, I said. So you can get the book you promised to lend me.

All right. Nonong said, although there's not much print left to read any more — the Bureau has inked out all the nice pages and covered the pictures.

That's all right. I said, flinging my arms in a bored gesture the way I had seen movie stars do. It's better than dying slowly of boredom.

Are you lonely, Victoria?

No. I said defiantly, deep in my heart, lying.

We walked.

We turned into the stairs of his office in R. Hidalgo St. over which was a sign in Japanese characters. The back of the building had been bombed out and no one had bothered to clear up the rubble. There was a blackout notice again that night and it was pitch dark in the building. We groped our way to the head of the stairs and into the room. There were five desks and Nonong's was the farthestmost, under the electric fan. Kneeling, Nonong opened each drawer and ransacked its contents. It's here somewhere, he said.

I went out to the little balcony and stood looking down at the gradually emptying street. It was four days before Christmas. There were paper lanterns hanging at the windows of the houses but none of them was lighted, and they swayed, rustling dryly in the cold wind. I was tired of the war. I wished Nonong would put his arms around me and kiss my lips and always love me, but I knew that if he even as much as touched my hand I would slap him hard on the mouth and kick him on the shin and never speak to him again. He stood silently beside me and put his lean arms on the window sill, I could see the veins taut on them. Behind us, the darkness was absolute and complete.

What are you going to be after the war, Nonong?

Oh . . . a writer, I guess, or a bum or something.

Me, I'm going to buy a house on top of a hill and live there all my life alone.

Suppose someone falls in love with you?

Who's going to fall in love with me, silly?

I looked up at the stern profile etched in the dark, thin and beautiful and ascetic, like the face of Christ. Heavens, Nonong, I exclaimed. You look like God!

Don't be blasphemous, Victoria, where's your convent school breeding? He smiled. I've got the book now, let's go if you're ready.

We felt our way through the pitch-dark corridor to the stairs at the foot of which was the door in a well of smoky lights.

We were the lost generation: My brother Raul and his friends were neither men nor boys, they were displaced persons without jobs and they roamed the streets restlessly in search of something useful to do. My father had started a business making oil lamps and the boys helped him in the mornings, cutting the glass and hammering open the tin cans and shaping them in the vise to fit the pattern. But their afternoons were empty. Nonong and I learned to lag behind after church and walk, nibbling roasted coconuts that tasted like chestnuts when we were together. Sometimes I went with the Gang to the Farmacia de la Rosa where we could order real fresh milk ice cream. Mrs. de la Rosa told us her fresh milk came all the way from Pampanga every day and had to pass four sentries and that was why it was so expensive. Sometimes we went into a "Tugo and Pugo" stage show to buy an hour's laughter; at other times we rented bicycles and rode to the very end of town where nobody knew us, peeping over the fences of Japanese garrisons with the flag of the Rising Sun fluttering over it.

One day I told my mother that Nonong was coming that

afternoon and if I could ask him for supper. I slaved over a plateful of cassava cookies in front of a hot tin charcoal oven. Lina was the good cook but I disdained her help and advices. For supper we had fresh *tawits* from Batangas, and a good piece of the ham that Mr. Solomon had made. We waited for an hour past suppertime and still Nonong had not come. When we finally did sit down for supper, nobody said anything except for Boni, who, having arrived late, looked at the extra plate quizzically, opened his mouth and closed it again like a fish gasping for air.

It was raining when Nonong came, smelling of beer, three hours late and sorry. I had already put away the supper dishes and cassava cookies I had sweated over all afternoon, and I was still angry. He sat on the large *kamagong* chair and I sat on the other *kamagong* chair opposite him, with the vase of santan flowers between us. And then we looked at each other and stopped dead still. For we could feel each other's hearts and knew what was there, what had been growing for months without our knowledge and consent. And heavy with grief I said simply, I dreamt of you last night. You were sitting on a chair and I was on the floor hugging your knees and I said I love you, and you said, that's all right you'll get over it.

He put out his fingers tentatively and stroked the back of my hand and I pulled it away. But in a minute we were touching again and I was crying into his palm and he said, Help me, I'm so unhappy. But after a while we heard Eden's slippers slapping on the floor of the dining room when she had gone to open a can of milk for the baby, and I told him to go away and never see me again.

On February 17, Nonong telephoned me. We talked a long, long time about this and that and many useless things. Then just before the Japanese cut off our line, I heard his voice at

the other end say soft but clearly, Listen to this, Victoria, and remember: I-love-you, and that was the only time he ever said it.

IV

We had run to the church rotunda and even there the dugouts were every place, you were lucky if you could find a place to dig. The house had burned down and Boni had gotten burned trying to save Mr. Solomon who had panicked and couldn't get himself out of his locked room. Father and Raul were carrying Boni in a blanket fashioned into a hammock. Lina and I walked together — she had on her belt in which were all her treasures, and the six string bags with clothes in them. I was carrying my favorite dress, a pillow and a bottle of precious water. Immediately behind us Eden walked with the two-month-old baby in her arms. Mother walked last of all, pale and tight-lipped, carrying the kettleful of rice she had boiled for the Monday meal and the slices of roasted pork. From Taft Ave. you could see clear through to the seashore for all the buildings were charred and rutted. The Japanese had barricaded themselves in the Rizal Coliseum and you could hear the mortar shells go boom from there and boom again a mile away.

A trio of planes roared dangerously low. Shakily, Lina and I dived into a shelter where a Chinese consul and his family crouched, and bitterly, they reproached us for crowding them in the already cramped space. Mother had run into another hole and ran out screaming for there was in it a man with half of his face shot off. Outside the shelter, we could hear Boni begging, please don't leave me . . . We were scattered in all directions.

Somehow we found each other again. Papa's plan was to go south to Pasig to escape the mortar shells that were coming from the north. He and Raul took up Boni again and started to walk. Somewhere in the running, I had lost my shoes and was

proceeding barefoot, I had also forgotten my favorite dress in the last dugout. Whenever the mortar shells dropped around us, we threw ourselves flat on the ground and covered our ears, but still we could hear the whistling and the unearthly screams of the people who had been hit. After one of the raids which lasted longer than usual, we burrowed out of the shelters to find Boni gone. Someone told us later that he had been seen crawling to Taft Avenue.

On our way to Pasig we scampered for safety into the old Avellana home, the only one standing in Malate. A Japanese sniper in a battered car was shooting at us and we went into the enclosed ruins, picking our way hurriedly over the wounded and the dead. Raul was the calmest of all. He had taken the kettle of rice from Mother and whenever he dived to the ground, a little of the rice spilled but he gathered it again, brushing the earth from the pork with invincible good humor. He had his rosary with him and never parted with it, he vowed that if nobody got hurt he would become a priest.

We entered the damaged cellar and found there a group of hysterical mestizas. One of them, Señora Bandana's daughter, a friend of Lina's, persuaded her that the place had been continuously machine gunned and that they should transfer to a concrete garage nearby where the rest of the family were. Lina left with her. We were willing to take our chances and remained behind. We settled ourselves comfortably, taking small swallows of water from our bottle, but not one of us could eat. The baby sucking at Eden's breast was drawing blood and Eden's tears were falling on its face. In a few moments Lina was back alone. She was hysterical. The garage she and her friend had gone into had been hit by a grenade, and she had seen the whole Bandana family and her friend perish in it.

We ran without any sense of direction. Finally, we found a

high concrete wall against which several galvanized iron sheets had fallen, forming a safe shelter, but every time someone moved, the sheets clattered noisily, betraying our presence. The few remaining Japanese soldiers were desperate: with bayonets bared, they stalked the ruins, thirsting to run through anything that moved. Raul pillowed his head in his arms and snored like a baby. We heard a Japanese soldier patrolling nearby, his hobnailed boots crunching heavily on the rubble. Eden's baby began to whimper. Eden offered her breast but the baby refused it, for it could no longer give any nourishment. Keep him quiet, my mother hissed. The footsteps were growing fainter and then they stopped altogether. We heard a revolver cock. The the footsteps started again, tracing the same path outside our shelter. The baby was now whimpering in earnest. Beat its head with a bottle, somebody suggested. The bottle was thrust in Papa's hand. He raised his hands for the blow and brought them down limply, he had a weak stomach. He tried next to strangle the tiny neck but his fingers turned weak and rubbery. The soldier was almost upon us. Luckily, the baby quieted for a moment.

Only when the footsteps receded could we talk. Papa said, Eden, go away with your child and save us, and maybe you too can be saved elsewhere. Eden crept out slowly, making an infernal racket with the sheets. In a moment she was crawling back. Wordlessly, she turned over the baby to Papa like an offering. The Japanese was returning. Lina cursed, restlessly she paced back and forth, standing up and sitting down. I've got it! she cried, let me . . . She took the pillow I had been carrying all this time and put it on the baby's face. Then she sat on it, hard. The mother stared dumbly at the earth, her hands dangling between her legs. There was a struggle under the pillow and a smothered whimper. Slowly, Lina got up, biting her nails. She became hysterical and Papa had to hit her across

the mouth. Eden took the dead baby and began rocking it to sleep.

We slept from exhaustion. The crunching footsteps had disappeared. The moon rose bright and clear, like the promise of another time, and we could find our way out. A group pushing a wooden cart full of pots and pans and mat bundles were coming towards us. The Americans are here, the father of the group we met said. They have gone over Santa Cruz bridge. Papa counted the heads. Boni was gone. Mr. Solomon was gone. We couldn't find Eden. We looked back to where we had come from and through the twisted steel buttresses of the ravished homes, we could see a lonely figure poking amid the debris.

She has probably gone back to bury the child, Mother said.

Let's go ahead then, Father said. She'll catch up with us.

E. P. Patanne

The Bomb

They came up from the moon-drenched sea like dark wraiths carrying a treasure from the deep. They sloshed in the surf, their quiet cursing drowned by the crash of the waves. They cursed their failing strength, the object they had brought up to the shallows and the seaweeds that clotted the shore.

The object they had salvaged from the bottom of the sea showed clearly where the waves crumbled upon the shore and folded back into the dark sea. They tossed aside the rope that had shackled the thing which had a snub nose at one end and steel fins at the other.

They pushed the bomb clear over the top of a sandy slope and slowly rolled it to a spot in the shadow of aroma trees whose thomy branches formed a wreath around the forsaken cove.

As if at a given signal, they slumped down beside the bomb resting their heads on the shell-encrusted steel casing and gulping the cool night air, oblivious of the fact that the bomb had no need for air; but it was alive, the terror within it imprisoned and silent, waiting with a breath of its own.

The two men lay panting, their faces glistening in the dusky moonlight. One had an old face etched with lines and

sharpened by too many suns. The face bore a wistful look. The eyes, rimmed with pain at what they had seen, the corners of the mouth drooping.

The younger one was pale and lean, uncreased except for an anxious crinkle on the forehead. The eyes, too, carried a hurt expression. Already the face bore signs of rapid aging.

After a short while, the old one pushed himself up. "Let us rest a while before we open it," he muttered.

The young one turned. "Whenever you're ready," he said. "My hands are still shaking."

He held them up before his eyes. They felt limp. His eyes alighted on the gold band on one of the fingers. He began to think. As he withdrew his hands, they seemed to part a hidden curtain in his mind.

He could see quite clearly a lonely hut by the sea. The scene quickly vanished. Now, he was peering into the interior of the hut; an oil lamp turned down its glow upon a mosquito net which occupied almost half of the living room. Sprawled in varying postures on the mat were his little boys and the baby, a girl. The child lay quietly beside her mother, whose one breast was exposed. Her eyelids would flutter. She was half-awake, listening to footfalls on the sand. She always waited for him. She would be angry again because he was coming home late. He frowned, then smiled.

Wait till she heard the good news. She would rejoice over his good fortune. She would be happy, and the children would be happy, too. A grin nicked the corner of his mouth.

A hand tapped his shoulder and the vision fled. He sat up with a start.

"Peles, I think it is time to begin," the old man said.

He nodded, watched the old man get up, bend over the

bomb and feel its cold nose.

He rose too and squatted beside the old man. He looked warily around.

The moon was like a huge searchlight in the sky. The shadows on the sand swayed with the wind. Peles saw nothing but the dark stretch of the aroma trees that walled them from the land. Now and then, he caught the flecks of fireflies pricking the grey gloom.

"We shall start at this end," the old man said, tapping the bulbous nose of the bomb. He smiled, more out of concern for his companion's state of mind rather than an expression of anticipated joy.

Peles nodded, rubbing his palms.

"Once we have pulled out the detonator, everything will be easy. Wait here," the old man said. He got up, walked over to a thick bristle of tall grass and returned with a canvas bag from which he produced a big monkey wrench and a flashlight. The bag smelled of oil. The old man handed Peles the flashlight.

"Now, hold the light at this end," he said, tapping the knob on the nose of the bomb.

Peles fumbled with the switch. As the light fell on the nose of the bomb, the old man dropped to his knees and began to open the jaws of the big wrench.

"Now watch me closely," he whispered. He fitted the toothed clamp around the knob, tried its bite, then slowly let his weight fall on the wrench handle. The thick bolt creaked. Peles saw the old man's face become taut and his teeth clenched. He sank with the handle. He set the wrench on the knob again and brought his weight to bear upon the handle. He tried this three or four times till the bolt turned loose in its tread. It was done very quickly, surely, but with an almost savage force.

The old man began to loosen the bolt. When it finally came off, he seemed to have caught a sharp jab on the chin. He jerked back, fell flat on his back and started gasping. "She is tough," he breathed. "I think I will rest a while."

Peles stared at the old man's face; it looked like a death mask. He looked at the nose of the bomb. Where the knob was, a shining piece of metal tubing stuck out. He switched off the light. The old man was breathing hard.

Peles kept staring at the metal tubing. Then he felt the old man move.

The old man got up and sat on his haunches, his arms hanging limp by his sides, his breathing still measured and heavy. "That's the detonating mechanism." Peles only caught the words "detonating mechanism."

The old man wiped his grimy hands on his wet trousers. "Flashlight," he called softly. "Now, hold it steady on the tube."

Peles watched him clamp a thumb and forefinger around the tube and gingerly pull it out. "There," the old man said, "It's done." He gritted his teeth in an awkward grin. "Aye, the monster is finally tamed."

He handed Peles the tubing. Peles looked at it and laid it gently on the sand.

"Remember, you pull this thing out slowly and very carefully. Don't jar it. Be very careful. A slight jar and you break a glass capsule inside. Then, boom! The end." The old man threw his hands up and let them fall. "The end."

"I shall be very careful," Peles said. "First the knob, then the tube. The tube has to be handled like a newborn child."

The old man frowned. "More than that. Like a . . ." his voice faltered, his thought suspended. "Well, like a lighted fire-cracker." Peles nodded.

The old man thrust a hand into the bag and pulled out a hack-saw. "Go get an empty can and fill it up with water. Sea water will do. We will start to open her up."

Peles quickly got up and ran down the beach. He returned with a tin can filled with water.

"Here's the water," Peles said.

"All right. Now, I'm going to start cutting around the nose. While I'm doing it, I want you to keep wetting the groove. This way, no spark is produced."

Peles held the tin can over the hack-saw ripping into steel.

* * *

Peles walked home, his body tingling with excitement. He began to run, then slowed down, thinking of tomorrow.

A fish net was slung over his shoulder; the fish basket dangling by his side was empty and dry. Now and then, he looked over his shoulder in the direction of the cove. They had rolled the precious casing into the deep and had taken the precious powder to Mang Selong; he who sold the powder to certain people who in turn sold it to fishermen for dynamite fishing. Mang Selong promised to give them the money by noon the following day. And it was only the beginning.

Peles recalled the time when the village was prosperous; that was when the men dove for bombs off Corregidor. He was only a boy then. And fishing with dynamite was good. The cache of bombs off Corregidor had been salvaged. There were no more big bombs left in those waters. The bomb divers went back to fishing, but there seemed to be only a few fishes left in the sea. He had seen the village, once upon a time prosperous, slowly transformed into a miserable cluster of dwellings. The ones who had money and thought of tomorrow had built themselves solid wooden and concrete houses; others invested in powerful fishing boats with diesel engines. The *basnig* scoured the deep

seas far beyond the peninsula.

Peles thought those good old days were coming back. He felt proud of himself. After all, it was he who had discovered the new cache of bombs in the sunken barge.

What to do with all the money that was coming. He began shopping in his mind. He was in Manila, walking down *Avenida Rizal*, picking out things for himself, his wife and the children: shoes, shirts, pants, belts, dresses, watches, toys for the children. He would have to hire a jeepney to carry all the goods home. He chuckled to himself. Then, he bit his lips and closed his eyes. He was a God-believing man. And he felt ashamed of his thoughts. "God, help me. I am doing this not for myself. I am doing this for my children. I hope You understand. I want to thank You for this bounty." His steps became slower, steadier.

Having convinced himself it was the Lord who had guided him to the sunken barge and the pile of bombs, Peles started feeling good again. No more meal-less days for him and his family. He would pay all his debts. He would even send money to his parents, to his brothers and sisters, to his wife's folks. No more *vales* at the store. Of course he would not have all the treasure to himself. He was not greedy. He would only get enough. The rest he would leave to the village. That should make everybody happy. He felt like shouting but checked himself.

He reached the *camachile*-covered strip of shore and knew he was home. He ran toward a faint light showing through the sawali slats of his house. There used to be a cluster of huts nearby, but these had been dismantled one by one and carried off to another site. Their owners had left the place when the bombs in the Corregidor waters were gone and the fishing became bad. Only the artesian well remained, and his tiny hut.

Peles sprinted across a carpet of runner plants that matted the

beach. He caught sight of the moon and placed the time at well past midnight. He slackened his pace.

The cutting job had not taken long. He remembered how some of the dark powder spilled on to his hands. He could still smell it. He recalled how Mang Inggo scooped the powder into a thick plastic bag, then another and another, till they had four bags full. He remembered Mang Inggo's face as he sank his hands into the powder and cried out, "We are rich. Peles, we are rich."

He ran the short distance to the hut, then shouted his wife's name. "Erlin! Erlin!"

A long, uneasy interval, then a tired voice sounding drowsily and piqued. "Peles?"

"Open the door quick," he cried. He stood in the doorway, breathless and trembling. The faint light inside gathered brilliance as the wick of the kerosene lamp was turned up. He heard the rasp of the wooden bolt as it was unhinged and the door creak open.

His wife stared open-mouthed as he walked in, a foolish grin on his mouth.

"Are you drunk?" she asked. She made a move to go back to the mat. She did not really care whether he was drunk or in trouble. The question was intended to be a rebuke. She was a thin-faced woman with eyes that had acquired a listless look.

Peles laughed. "No, I am not drunk," he said, still chuckling. He peeked through the mosquito net at his children lying asleep, then eased himself into a cozy corner. "Erlin, I have something to tell you." He watched her slip under the net.

"Your supper is on the table," she said.

"Do not sleep yet," he begged her. "Erlin, we are going to be rich."

He waited for some reaction from his wife. All he heard was a grunt.

"I will tell you all about it," he said, quickly shedding his shirt and pants. He ducked into the open kitchen and was soon sloshing water all over him. He called for dry clothes.

When he entered the hut again, he saw his wife seated on the floor, staring at the children asleep. He grabbed the plates of food from the table and joined his wife on the floor. He started gulping the food. "You know where I was the whole night?" he asked.

"Serenading," she said dryly.

"I was out in the cove. Where I set my crab traps. And I stumbled upon something." He drank to clear his throat. "I was looking over my traps when I dropped my knife. I dove after it. It's not very deep. You know what I found down there? A sunken barge, it must have been scuttled during the war. And you know what was in the hold of that barge? Bombs! Big fat bombs!"

He paused when he saw his wife's face take on a sudden tense look.

"Bombs," he repeated. "You could fill up the small church with those bombs. Tonight, Mang Inngo and I opened one of them. He is the one who knows how."

His wife just gaped at him, shaking her head slowly.

"Hundreds of bombs," he added. "I know it is a dangerous thing. I know. But do you know how much Mang Selong is paying us for the powder from just one bomb? Eight-hundred pesos! Imagine, eight-hundred pesos for one night's work!"

His wife just sat there, looking through him; she was dumb-founded.

"Erlin," he grinned. "We will be rich. We will build a big

house. We will have a fishing boat. You have everything you ever wanted."

She gave a frightened smile.

"Tomorrow I will have four-hundred pesos. Then, I will go after another bomb. It's quite a dive. But I know now how to open the bomb. Mang Inggo showed me how. Mang Inggo said he would not go with me anymore. I think he is afraid. But I am not. Anyway, he is an old man now."

His wife slowly closed her eyes.

"Erilin," he said, grabbing her shoulder. "Think of the money we will have. We will never be poor again."

Her eyes were wide-open now. They assumed a sharp look. "You are mad, Peles," she said, her lips twitching.

He frowned.

"Have you ever thought of the men who have been killed by the bombs? How many are still around? Without arms, without legs."

"What are you talking about? This is my big chance. This is like winning in the sweepstakes. I know it is risky, but I have got to take the risk. I do not want to be a poor fisherman all my life. I am not doing this for myself. I am doing this for you and the children. I want to see you all happy." He was holding her hand.

She wrenched her hand from his grasp and got up. She glowered at him. "No, no, Peles," she was shaking her head. "I have seen so many dead men blown to bits by the bomb."

He snorted. "You are the one who is mad. This is money that I cannot just throw away like a stone."

"Money!" she flung the word at him. "Hah! You seem to have forgotten what happened to my brother while opening a bomb. Or to your own father, Mang Tacio, Ka Endong, many

others. You talk about being rich. Look at the families of the many who grew rich from the bombs. Yes, they live in big houses. Widows and orphans living in empty, big houses."

He knew what she was talking about. There was a saying among the poor folk: better poor but happy with your family. "But Erlin," he persisted. "This is my only chance. I can not let it pass. It is as if the Lord had guided me to this thing and I must do what I have to do . . . for the children . . ."

"No!" she cried.

He rose and sat on the bench, shaking his head. "Look, Erlin," he said haltingly. "Those men who got killed were careless. They were unlucky. But do you think they would have stopped had there been more bombs to fish out and open?"

"Anything can happen," she said. "If you are not killed by a bomb, the constabulary will catch you."

"The PC will never know," he said. "There are still people down the coast making a living on the powder."

"They are desperate," she said.

"They have to live, Erlin. They have to. They have to take chances. Life is like that."

She was suddenly silent and cast a glance at the mosquito net. She walked toward the net, her head hung down low. He caught her hand and pulled her down. "Erlin, I promise to be very careful."

She pulled herself away and he followed her inside the netting. They sat on the mat inside the net and looked at the sleeping children. She turned to him and flung her arms around his neck. "Peles, I am afraid," she sobbed. He patted her on the back.

* * *

When Peles arrived home shortly before noon that day, he

looked like the man who had seen Heaven and talked with the Lord. He had been running; perspiration covered his face.

"Erlin!" he called out some distance from the hut. He almost fell upon his eldest son who met him at the door, carrying the baby. "Where's your mother, Dencio?"

"She went to the *poblacion*, Father," the boy said.

"What for?" he asked, going to the water jar. "Why did she go to town?" He was angry.

"She had her veil," the boy said.

He wiped his face with a dirty shirt hanging from a nail on the corner post, then taking off his shirt, he called his children around. He took the baby in his arms and scanned the grimy faces of his three young boys.

They were very young faces but with a tired look on them and the wistfulness of a life spent in extreme poverty. They were hungry faces. They stared eagerly at him. Only the baby girl seemed to have been spared the lashing of time and a diet that was as lean as their bodies.

"My children," he said, smiling, "from now on, you will have all the things you like. Toys, new clothes, food, shoes, candies, cakes, ice cream."

They merely gaped at him, then they exchanged glances and began to smile.

"What do you want, Dencio?"

The eldest boy consulted the roof of the hut. "A toy airplane."

"I want a toy gun," the second boy volunteered.

"This coming Saturday, three days from now, I am going to the city. I will get you the toys and more. What about you, Roming?" he asked the youngest of the boys, barely two years old.

"A gun, too, so I can play with Popoy," the child said.

Peles turned to the little girl. "And what would baby like?" He tickled her chin. "I think I know: a big beautiful doll that closes its eyes when you lay it down. And a pretty dress."

The boys fell into delighted talk, extolling the virtues of their choices.

Just then a shadow fell on the doorway. Peles looked up. "Erlin," he cried, setting the little girl down and reaching into his pocket. "I have the money. Here."

She ignored him. She went straight to a trunk in a corner of the hut, lifted its cover and deposited the veil and a rosary in a cardboard box. Then she started to undress, carefully folding the mothball-smelling dress which she wore when she went to town and putting this in the trunk. She had on a faded chemise which was her usual house dress.

"Look, Erlin!" Peles thrust out his two hands full of money. Look! We are rich!"

She looked at the money, the delight on her face quickly turning into anxiety.

He spread the bills on the floor. "There, Erlin: Four-hundred pesos. Count them." He sat on the bench and lighted a cigarette.

A gust of wind sent some of the bills flying. She knelt to pick up the bills. She did not look worried anymore. She piled the bills neatly, then held the wad between her two hands. "I have never seen so much money in my whole life," was all she could say.

Peles was overjoyed. He was watching her every move.

"Peles," she said.

"Yes, yes," he replied.

"I am happy. I am content to have this. We will put it in a small business." She said softly, "We can make it grow."

Peles caught the drift of her words but said nothing.

She wrapped the money in a handkerchief and tucked it away somewhere in the trunk. She went to the stove and looked into a clay pot. "Peles," she said in an imploring tone, "please, leave the bombs alone."

Peles got up from the bench, went to the window and took a deep draught from the cigarette, gazing far out into the sea. He thought over what his wife had just said. He did not speak until he heard a fire crackling in the stove. The boys had gone out to the yard to play. Erlin had picked up the baby.

"The money will not last long, Erlin," he said. "How long? What business is there in this poor barrio? People will simply take what you can sell and promise to pay tomorrow and tomorrow. I say it is foolish to push aside the hand that offers you a fortune."

"Peles," she intoned, this time looking him straight in the eye. "You leave the bombs alone." She was pleading as well as scolding him with her gaze. "You know where I have just been? I went to church to pray, to ask the Lord for help and guidance. With the money we have capital. We can use it and make more money without you getting killed."

He snorted. "And I sit in a store and make a few centavos."

"That's better than getting yourself blown up."

"Erlin, I would rather go fishing than keep a store. I would die just sitting there and swatting flies" he said, making a face.

"All right, I shall watch the store. You can go fishing all your life, but do not touch the bombs. Let others take them out. If they make money, the store will make money."

Peles grimaced, wiping his face with his hand.

Before he could muster his thoughts, she spoke again. "Think of your children. If you are killed what then? With all that money, I suppose I should marry again. We have a little money and we are happy together. What more can you ask? I am not asking you to do this. All I am asking you is to please leave the bombs alone."

Peles was wincing. "All right," he said, "I will not touch the bombs. I'll just stay home and rot. That is safer." He snatched his shirt and strode out of the house.

"Peles!" his wife called but he ignored her.

* * *

During the next two days Peles stayed home. On the third day, as he had promised, he went to the city and brought home some toys and some clothes. He seldom spoke to his wife except to grunt his wishes. Evenings he would visit the village store and drink rum with friends. He kept the bombs a secret. Very often he was alone in the store but he was still drunk.

As soon as Aling Ason announced she was closing up, Peles would buy a bottle of rum to take home. Actually he nipped at the drink all the way home till he passed out. If he did not drink, he could not sleep from thinking about the bombs.

The children kept out of his way. He was always grumbling about something or another. His wife knew why and decided to be quiet.

A vague fear gnawed at Peles. Something had tightened up into a ball inside him. This he tried to dissolve with alcohol. When drunk he would often fight down an urge to run over to Mang Inggo's place, rouse him from sleep, and drag him to the cove.

Not once but twice during the period when he shunted between the hut by the sea and the village did the recklessness to dive for the bomb almost overpower him. An almost physical

force was drawing him to the cove. Then, he would recall his wife's words, and he would stop in his tracks.

What he feared most was not being blown to nothingness but passing on to limbo and leaving his wife and children without a prop in life. And the thought that his wife would re-marry simply froze him.

* * *

Peles was alone in the store and drinking rum and coke. "Ason!" he called out to the storekeeper, a plump unmarried woman in her early thirties. "If I were married to you and I had plenty of money, that is, money from the powder in the bombs, would you let me?"

Ason, too homely, too dark to be attractive and too small to be worthy of any serious advances, pouted at him. "What did you say?" She was reading a Tagalog comic book.

Peles repeated his question slowly and capped it with a broad grin. He reached out for the half-empty bottle of rum.

Ason returned the grin. "Why should I?"

Peles was heartened. Ason's reply came as a confirmation to a nagging thought that Erlin could be wrong. Of course, he knew his wife was much too sentimental about the whole thing. And here was Ason who could be objective. He was developing a compulsion. Ason's words were encouraging, and his rather simple mind could not grasp the meaning in the tone of her voice. She did not care. Why should she?

Peles downed the last drop of rum and with a foolish grin walked out of the store.

Ason's call brought him back. "You forgot to pay, Peles."

He took out a crumpled five-peso bill and, still smiling, pressed it flat on the counter. "And I will need a small bottle to take home."

Ason seemed not to have heard him. She busied herself with the change, handed him the bottle, and went back to her comic book.

Peles took the road leading to the sea. There was something about the sea at night that seemed to hearken to man's deepest questionings. Besides, the clean, cool air salved a mind restless or troubled. Peles, taking a swig from the bottle, felt he was floating between sea and sky filled with stars. He was muttering to himself, "Let us go, Mang Inngo. I feel good tonight. I can dive four fathoms down very easily. We will make money. Let us make plenty of money."

He entered a shadowy patch of the shore where a coconut grove stood and through which a footpath meandered towards Mang Inngo's hut. A breeze was blowing from the sea. This cooled his face but his vision remained hazy. He walked straight into a coconut trunk. The bottle of rum fell from his grasp. He leaned against the trunk and looked in the direction of the cove. He felt cold. He picked up the bottle and decided to go home. On the way, he was shaking his head and talking once more to himself: "I do not feel too well. We should do it tomorrow night. Who knows, there may be hungry sharks waiting for me out there."

He kept talking to an imaginary Mang Inngo as he picked his way to the hut by the sea. Night sounds filled the air but he could hear the gentle splash of the waves upon the sandy shore. The moon was late in rising. By the time he reached the low stairway of his house, he had almost finished the bottle. He fell asleep by the door.

Erlin came upon his inert form in the morning. She was surprised to find that he had not fallen down the steps. She did not bother to wake him up but the children did. They climbed over him. Waking up from a drugged sleep seemed to him like coming out of a deep dive.

They were eating a noonday meal of rice and fish boiled with camote leaves and soured with tamarind. An extra fish had been broiled. The family sat on the floor and formed a tight little circle around a bowl of rice soaked in a thin soup. Erlin held the little girl on her thigh. The children ate hurriedly. As was the custom, they ate in silence. Outside, the waves made splashing sounds while the wind rustled the fronds of the coconut trees.

Then they heard an explosion.

The hut shook.

Peles broke the ensuing silence. "It seems to have come from the grove," he said.

"It sounded like a big bomb," his wife said.

"It seems to have come from Mang Inggo's place," Peles said, slowly getting up, his face suddenly pale. "I will go and see." He gulped some water quickly and was out of the house like an unwanted cat.

He ran down the beach. He did not have to run far. He spotted the part of the coconut grove where a cloud of dust and debris was settling down. The weather-worn nipa hut where Mang Inggo once lived was no longer there. Peles was now cursing under his breath. "Son of a whore, he must have dived for the bomb alone and stowed it away." His anger was a mixture of apprehension and dread.

Peles came upon a big gaping hole in the ground. The old hut was now a litter of bamboo and nipa. Thank God that Mang Inggo's family was away in the *poblacion* visiting with relatives. The old man was alone and had tried to open the bomb. Soon, Mang Inggo's wife came and so did his children, and the old woman could only say, "Aye, aye."

* * *

That night Peles got drunk earlier than usual. He could not

eat. He could not remain still, and with a bottle of rum, he paced the beach seeking consolation in the dark unchanging scene. He was crying and cursing at the same time when his wife came out of the dark and led him back to the hut.

In the morning, Peles went back to Mang Inngo's place and there he found Mang Inngo's family standing around the big hole in the ground. They stared at him, sullenly, saying nothing. He condoled with them stiffly and left. He knew the family blamed him. They had some reason to hate him.

Mang Inngo's remains filled a shoe box. These were placed in a coffin of varnished pine-wood. Peles and his wife attended the funeral along with the rest of the village. Their expressions of sympathy were acknowledged with stares and sullen nods.

Peles felt wretched. He got drunk again the night of the burial. He brought the bottle home, sat in a corner of the hut, and talked to no one in particular.

"Aling Sinang has no right to blame me for what happened," he said. "The old fool was greedy. He had to do it alone. Yet it was he who convinced me to go after the bombs. And he was the one who showed me how to open them. Why he did it alone, I will never know."

"Maybe they needed the money," his wife said through the mosquito net. The children had gone to sleep. "You know they were always in debt. What with a big family like that. Anyway, there you are. The bomb is a cursed thing."

Peles stared at the net and grunted. "Mang Inngo was a fool!" he shouted.

"Shush, you will wake up the children."

"He was crazy. His hands trembled. I saw how he fumbled when he opened the bomb. He probably jarred that delicate mechanism." He took a swallow from his bottle. "I could have

done better. The fool!"

His wife's words cut through the net. "Peles, you are thinking of the bombs. Stop it."

"I am not thinking of the bombs."

"Then stop thinking and go to sleep," his wife said.

"I will in a moment." He was silent for a long while. Then: "Erlin, we cannot live in this village any longer. People might even say that I had something to do with what happened. I can't be blamed for his death. Erlin, we must move out to another place."

His wife said nothing.

"But before we leave, I must have enough money."

There was a stirring inside the net. The wife was soon out of the net and facing him. "Peles, you are talking like a mad man."

"I have to."

"It is suicide."

"Listen, Erlin, we need money to move out and find a new home. The money is there for the taking. I can do it. We can move to the city and live there and the children can go to a good school. Erlin, we can have all the things in life that we ever dreamt of having.

"It's a terrible risk," was all that she could say.

"Trust me, Erlin. I need your help. We shall make it. We shall have a tomorrow."

She burst into tears. Soon, Peles was on his knees, ruffling her hair and crying, too.

* * *

The long day wore on. Peles squatted in the doorway, running his fingers across his chin. The mid-afternoon sun

glared down on the beach.

Peles thought of visiting the village store that night. He turned all his pockets out. They were empty except for the remains of a crushed cigarette.

His wife sat on the floor, trying to rock the little girl to sleep. The three boys played in the yard, digging holes in the sand and burying their feet. From where he sat, shifting his weight from one leg to another, Peles watched the sun go down. Then, he got up, his face tense and set. Without a word, he snatched a shirt and walked out of the house. His wife, seated by the sleeping child waved off flies from her face, watched him gather a coil of rope on the narrow porch and head for the cove. He had not been gone very long when she rose from the floor, walked to the door, and watched the sunset gather somber hues. She looked at her three little boys sitting on a rung of the ladder. They were also watching the sunset. She picked up the sleeping child and called out, "Dencio! Bading! Roming! Come, we are going after your father." Soon, they were running down the beach towards the cove with the darkness rushing upon the land.

* * *

The sun had sunk and the aroma trees around the cove formed a dark misshapen hedge. The shore was quiet in the twilight.

Silhouetted against a shimmering background of sea and sky lit by the afterglow was the figure of a man bending over a dark ponderous object. Nearby three little boys played in a pool of water. The woman holding the child with one hand walked over to where the children were playing and said something. She then set the child down on a dry spot and with her three little boys joined her husband to free the bomb from the tangle of rope.

Peles, watching his wife and three small children frantically untangle the line, could only mutter: "You should not have come, Erlin. You should not have come."

But the woman and the three little boys went grimly on with their work.

IV. Of Change and Values

The Old Well

Andres Cristobal Cruz

Zita

Arturo B. Rotor

Wedding Dance

Amador T. Daguiso

Ceremony

J. C. Tuvera

What Shall We Do When We All Go Out?

Gregorio C. Brillantes

Andres Cristobal Cruz

The Old Well

It is said that in Tibag there is no diaper that has not been washed with water from the deep, big old well.

It is said that in Tibag no one cooks and no one washes the dishes after without using the water from the well.

It is said that no one takes a bath without using the clean, cool water that is the blessing of the old brick well.

It could be said then that in Tibag no one is born and no one is buried without having drunk or without having been baptized with the water from the well.

If one thinks more about it, it could also be said that the life and death of the people in Tibag is in that well.

The well is certainly of value, but they no longer give much thought to this fact. For them, the well is already a part of their life and environment, a part of the legends and beliefs and superstitions they inherited and which they would hand over to their children who would in turn hand these down to their children.

No one could be sure as to when the well was dug. "It was during the Spanish times," the old folks said.

"You were not born yet, that well was already there," others

insisted.

As if to show proof, they would point to the bricks in the well. They are similar to and as hard as those used in the walls of Intramuros; or those used in the oldest Catholic churches in the Philippines.

However, others would argue that the well was dug, or to use the right word, was caused to be dug, by the authorities during the early period of the American occupation. As proof, they would say, there are many towns in the Philippines, particularly in Luzon, which have wells like the one in Tibag. And they would say that those wells could be found outside the old towns because it was easier to check the cholera epidemic which many times plagued the country and killed thousands of people. They said the germs were in the water, and if the source of the plague was just outside the town, the deadly plague could be checked more or less easily.

Vague as those beliefs were, the curious couldn't do anything. Believe us, they would say, and that was that.

That was what the old folks used to say to frighten those who went against their scheme. They said that at night when it was dark, especially when there was no moon, malignant spirits appeared near the well.

Hide, they would advise, and peep behind the *kakawate* trees. If you are lucky, you will see all of a sudden a very beautiful woman near the well. They say she is peering into the well to look for her lover who was drowned during the Spanish times. Once, they would say, different creatures appeared near the well and growled at each other.

And what were the malignant spirits really? Once, they recall, the young men stayed up late and hid themselves behind the *kakawate* trees. And what did they discover? Those who wanted to frighten others were the ones frightened instead. And

when the truth was out, somebody stood groping for something, it seemed, in the dark and ran after those who had discovered them. The jokes were endless when the "malignant spirits" were married in a hurry. They turned out to be the only widower and the oldest maid in Tibag.

That was but one of the many happy occurrences around the well of Tibag. Near the well the women and the young men of Tibag took their baths and washed clothes. With the young girls there, the young men kept washing their feet. There would be stolen glances, meaningful statements that were met with water splashed, or with threats to tell that became old, uncarried out. How noisy were the children bathing at the well, the sound of cans striking the rim of the well, the young women squealing while the young girls teased one another.

Many would say that in Tibag, life, like the old well, was what they had inherited and what their children and their children's children would in turn inherit.

One of those who could say so was Tandang Owenyo, the water carrier. He was the only water carrier in Tibag. The others who drew water from the well and used bamboo yokes and watercans used the water at home. The water the women and young women carried in water jugs or water cans was only for home use.

Drawing water for others was Tandang Owenyo's livelihood. He drew water for the owners of the houses in Tibag and he also filled the water jars and drums of those who, from time immemorial, had their water drawn for them. These were the families who, come the fiestas, had the biggest most sumptuous feasts, and who became chairmen of fiesta committees. They were the same families for whom Tandang Owenyo's grandparents also had drawn water.

Tandang Owenyo was about fifty years old. His grey hair was

cropped. He was of average height. He always wore a tight fitting undershirt with long sleeves. They said that when he was a young man, he was physically the strongest.

"Is that strange? His bones are well-stretched from drawing water while still a young man."

"Wasn't Ba Meroy an *aguador* too?"

"Oh, yes! Come to think of it!"

Tandang Owenyo's father was Ba Meroy. The old man died during the Japanese occupation.

"He inherited that livelihood."

"And Nana Pisyang Hilot? Wasn't it at the well . . . ?"

"Oh, yes! Tandang Owenyo courted Nana Pisyang at the well. Come to think of it."

"Was Nana Pisyang already a *labandera* then?"

"A *labandera*, yes. The people for whom Tandang Owenyo fetched water were the same people for whom Nana Pisyang washed clothes. That's why their story is beautiful."

"And Da Felisang Hilot?"

"Ah, she was also a *labandera*. She taught her daughter how to cure people . . . that is Nana Pisyang."

"There you are, that's life."

"Is it the same in America?"

"But that's America!"

"And this is the Philippines. Of course, here in our country, our means of livelihood is passed on by one generation to the next."

"All is inherited."

"Ba Meroy is an *aguador*, so, Tandang Owenyo, his son, is also an *aguador*."

"And Nana Pisyang's Da Felisa was a *labandera*."

"But Nana Pisyang also cures people"

"Aw, what is that? It is not every day that a child is born in Tibag. And just give her enough for coffee and she is satisfied."

"They can leave their livelihood to their children."

"Isn't it so that Nana Pisyang is helped by her young daughter Enyang? She has already a sixth-grader."

"And their Narsing?"

"Ah, Narciso did you say? Too bad! He finished high school, he couldn't continue."

"But that's enough. College graduate or not, it is the same."

"Narsing is bright. He always carries a book."

"He reads and borrows books from the library in town."

"Once I saw him carrying a book. I asked what it was."

"And what did he say?"

"*Florante at Laura*, he said."

"There you are. How unfortunate! And he is really bright at that."

"I hear he doesn't want to be an *aguador*."

"Maybe he is ashamed. Imagine, he almost went to college and he will end up drawing water. And how about the others? All they know is carabao English and they are all prosperous."

"You people! As if you didn't know the Philippines. It's because those people have the right connections."

"Narsing rebelled. He didn't want to shoulder a bamboo yoke. True, he fetched water. But that was only for their home use. And he would rather carry the watercans with his hands than use a bamboo yoke."

The old women washing clothes near the well said that if

Narsing would only carry a bamboo yoke, he could be mistaken for Tandang Owenyo when he was young. That was also the opinion of those who attended to their fighting cocks, and of those talking in front of the *sari-sari* store across from the old chapel.

Narsing's rebellion became keener everytime he heard such remarks. And rebellion carried with it a deep grudge.

"What did I go to school for, even if it's only up to high school," he said bitterly, "and then end up an *aguador*!"

His mother was hanging up clothes one morning when Narsing told her he wanted to go to Manila to look for work. The four clothes lines were heavy with clothes. Narsing never saw a patch of grass beside the fence of bamboo thickets without any clothes bleaching. On the other side of the fence towards the field, there was a plot of sweet potatoes the young leaves of which never matured because they always had them for food. There was a small bamboo trellis where the *upo* crawled.

Nana Pisyang gave Narsing the money. The amount was savings from the sale of the *upo* and what she earned from washing clothes. The amount saved was intended for the next schooling.

Narsing stayed with an aunt in Tondo, Velasquez. In the morning, he went in search of a job. Anything except an *aguador*. He felt hunger, but he braved it. He tried various firms and factories. But "No Vacancy" and "*Walang Bakante*" signs met him on the gates and doors.

It was not only he who failed. Often he would be in the company of others who finished Education and Commerce. They even had letters of recommendation from senator and congressmen so-and-so. Narsing felt like laughing and crying at the same time. People didn't care any more, he realized, for the signatures of politicians. Perhaps, even if it were Pontius Pilate's

signature itself, there still would be no work.

Narsing happened to pass by a Chinese vegetable garden. I might as well try this, he told himself, and went to the one-hectare vegetable garden fenced with barbed wire. He talked to the Chinese whom he saw carrying a wooden barrel. To take away worms, break the ground, spade and hoe, Narsing told the Chinese.

"No," the Chinese said. "That is my work. All this I plant, I water."

"So there's no work that you can give?" Narsing said and he noticed the belligerence in his voice. He felt angry.

"If you like, only for today," the Chinese said. "I just want to help you."

"Yes, what shall I do?"

"You get water, get from well, sprinkle water. Do you like that?"

The Chinese was offering him the wooden barrel and its bamboo yoke.

The afternoon of the next day, Narsing told his aunt in Velasquez that he was returning to Tibag. He took a bus. It was an ordinary thing for anyone in Tibag to return without finding a job in Manila, especially jobs that were new and not inherited. On the way, he thought of ways to escape the life he was to inherit, a life that was merely survival, a condition of suffering from the beginning to the end, ignorance, poverty, always dependent if not on the charity of some, then on the exploitation of others.

It would have been better, Narsing told himself, if I had not gone to school. It was as if his mind and imagination had opened to the thousand and one mysteries of nature and to the many challenges of life which he could not overcome.

It was almost dark when he reached Tibag. The little ones rushed to him, asking if he brought anything for them. No, he brought nothing.

Enyang, his sister, set the dishes on the low table next to him. While they ate, Narsing could sense that his mother and father were waiting for him to tell them about his search for a job in Manila. But what could he tell them about the difficulties of looking for a job? They already knew that.

His mother offered him food and urged him to eat more. As if he had starved in Manila. He glanced now and then at his father who was at the head of the low table. His feelings revolted against the scene, against what he saw. His parents hardly ate. They drank more water than they ate food. They were having tomatoes and *bagoong* with the usual kamote leaves, a bowl of pickled mustard leaves and a couple of sliced fried milkfish. Now and then his mother admonished the children who were like cats and dogs fighting over food. In the whole of Tibag it seemed that only their table had no leftovers. In the past, it was not so. Now, during the Sundays when they could afford *sinigang* and *nilaga*, almost a whole can of water would be poured in so there would be more soup. While the children grew and their appetites grew, father and mother ate less. He, too, was beginning to do the same.

He rebelled against the scene. It was the same rebellion when he caught the sight of his sisters secretly trying on the good and fine clothes their mother washed for others. It was the same rebellion he felt each time he looked at his father after a whole day of fetching water and he, Narsing, would notice the deep lines on his brow, when he saw him carrying the two cans of water hanging from a bamboo yoke, looking like a Christ bent, his suffering eternal.

That evening, Narsing and his father had an argument.

Narsing was sitting on the first rung on top of their stairs. He was looking at the end of the yard. He was thinking of attending for awhile to the planting of vegetables. All of a sudden he noticed his father standing beside him.

"Inasmuch as you want to earn," his father suggested in a calm voice, "why don't you try fetching water?"

His father was going to say more. But in an instant Narsing could not contain himself. His answer was loud and snarling.

"What are you! You've always been an *aguador*, and you still want me to be like you!"

His father was struck dumb. His mother rushed out, asking frantically why, what happened?

His father cursed him. "Why?" he said, his voice trembling and bitter, "what's wrong with fetching water? I raised all of you on that!"

Narsing was about to stand. But his father followed him and with all his strength pulled and slapped him in total fury. Narsing felt his face skinned. He raised an arm to ward off another slap. He saw his father's eyes blaze.

His mother shouted. There was a wail in her voice. His mother hugged him tight. She told him not to strike back. Even the children were wailing, like small animals.

His father moved away and stretched himself against the nipa wall. Narsing could hear what he was saying.

"And you even went to school. If you have any plans, do it. I am not stopping you. The day will come when you will feel it too . . . you will know it too."

News spreads in Tibag. When Narsing fetched water for use at home, the people didn't greet or talk to him as they used to. It was the same way with his father. The people, it seemed, were ashamed to ask, but they were not ashamed to gossip among

themselves.

A week after this argument, Tandang Owenyo met an accident at the well. People said he slipped and it was fortunate that he fell outside the well. Otherwise he would have been killed for sure. The old man's breast hit the watercans and he suffered a dislocation. His elbow was fractured. Many said the old man fainted. Others said his mind was not on what he was doing.

Tandang Owenyo had a fever. The best *manghihiilot* from the other barrio was called. Would Tandang Owenyo fetch water again? Narsing's mother did not know what to do. Their already big debt at Da Utah's store grew even bigger due to the old man's sickness.

One afternoon while Narsing was fetching water for their home use, somebody found the courage to ask if his father was already well. And why didn't he fetch water instead? It was unfortunate that what Tandang Owenyo earned would have to go to others.

The way that was said was not an insult. That, to Narsing's way of thinking, meant he would inevitably be heir to the livelihood of his father.

The next morning, what Narsing was expecting to happen did not happen. He was not teased or booed. His shoulders were skinned and the whole night his bones ached from climbing up and down steep stairs, carrying and pouring water. He was already the *aguador*.

Narsing couldn't sleep. He could see the distant stars. He could hear the sounds of the small animals and the creaking of bamboo trees now pushed, now pulled by the winds. In the distance, a dog howled as if it had seen a ghost. He couldn't sleep. He was thinking of many things. He remembered when he was still in high school . . . Before he slept he saw in himself

the image of his father who looked like Christ bearing the bamboo yoke and the two heavy watercans. He thought of planting the backyard that was no longer theirs but which they only rented now.

It was still dawn when Narsing went down the house. And once more he fetched water. His shoulder burned. He was panting hard and it was as if he could not stand straight.

That afternoon, Narsing was waiting for his turn at the well. The young women and men were teasing each other around the well. Laughing, somebody suggested that they baptize the new *aguador*.

"Christen Narsing!" those around the well shouted, and somebody dared splash water.

Arturo B. Rotor

Zita

Turong brought him from Pauambang in his little sailboat for the coastwise steamer did not stop at any little island of broken cliffs and coconut palms. It was almost midday; they had been standing in that white glare where the tiniest pebble and fluted conch had become points of light, piercing-bright — the municipal president, the parish priest, Don Eliodoro who owned almost all the coconuts, the herb doctor, the village character. Their mild surprise over when he spoke in their native dialect, they saw him more closely, and his easy manner did not deceive them. His head was uncovered and he had a way of bringing the back of his hand to his brow or mouth. They read behind that too; it was not a gesture of protection. "An exile has come to Anayat . . . and he is so young, so young." So young and lonely and sufficient unto himself. There was no mistaking the stamp of an inflexible will on that brow, the brow of those who have to be cold and haughty, those shoulders stooped slightly, less from the burden that they bore than from a carefully cultivated air of unconcern; no common school teacher could dress so carelessly and not appear shoddy; no one could assume the detached, bored uncongenial manner in a small village and not excite offense.

They had prepared a room for him in Don Eliodoro's house so that he would not have to walk far every morning, but he gave nothing more than a glance at the big stone building with its Spanish azotea, its arched doorways, its flagged courtyard. He chose Turong's home, a shaky hut near the sea. Was the sea rough and dangerous at times? He did not mind it. Was the place far from the church and the schoolhouse? The walk would do him good. Would he not feel lonely with nobody but an illiterate fisherman for companion? He was used to living alone. And they let him do as he wanted, for the old men knew that it was not so much the nearness of the sea that he desired as its silence so that he might tell its secrets he could not tell anyone else.

They thought of nobody but him; they talked about him in the barber shop, in the cockpit, in the *sari-sari* store, the way he walked, the way he looked at you, his unruly hair. They dressed him in purple and linen, in myth and mystery, put him astride a black stallion, at the wheel of a blue automobile. Mr. Reteche? Mr. Reteche? The name was redolent of the glitter and fantasy of a place and people they would never see. He was the scion of a powerful family, a poet and artist, a prince.

That night, Don Eliodoro had the story from his daughter of his first day in the classroom; she perched wide-eyed, low-voiced, short of breath on the arm of his chair.

"He bowed as if we were his equals. He asked for the list of our names and as he read each one we looked at him long. When he came to my name, Father, the most surprising thing happened. He started pronouncing it and then he stopped as if he had forgotten something and just stared and stared at the paper in his hands. I heard my name repeated three times through his half-closed lips. 'Zita, Zita, Zita.'

'Yes, sir. I am Zita.'

"He looked uncomprehendingly, inarticulately, and it seemed to me, Father it actually seemed that he was begging me to tell him that that was not my name, that I was deceiving him. He looked so miserable and sick I felt like sinking down or running away.

" 'Zita is not your name; it is just a pet name, no?'

" 'My father has always called me that, sir.'

" 'It can't be; maybe it is Pacita or Luisa or —'

"His voice was scarcely above a whisper, Father, and all the while he looked at me begging, begging. I shook my head determinedly. My answer must have angered him, he must have thought I was so hard-headed for he said, 'A thousand miles, Mother of Mercy . . . It is not possible.' He kept on looking at me; he was so hurt perhaps that he should have such a stubborn pupil. But I am not really so, am I, Father?"

"Yes, you are, my dear. But you must try to please him, he is a gentleman, he comes from the City. I was thinking . . . private lessons, perhaps, if he won't ask so much." Don Eliodoro had his dreams and she was his only daughter.

Turong had his own story to tell in the barber shop that night, a story as vividly etched as the lone coconut palm in front of the shop that shot up straight into the darkness of the night, as vaguely disturbing as the secrets that the sea whispered into the night.

"He did not sleep a wink, I am sure of it. When I came from the market the stars were already out and I saw that he had not touched the food I had prepared. I asked him to eat and he said he was not hungry. He sat by the window that faces the sea and just looked out hour after hour. I woke up three times during night and saw that he had not so much as changed his position. I thought once that he was asleep and came near him, but he

motioned me away. When I awoke at dawn to prepare the nets, he was still there."

"Maybe he wants to go home already." They looked up with concern.

"He is sick. You remember Father Fernando? He had a way of looking like that, into space, seeing nobody, just before he died."

* * *

Every month there was a letter that came for him. Sometimes two or three large, blue envelopes with a gold design in the upper left hand corner and a broad, angular sweeping handwriting. One time Turong brought it to him in the classroom. They were busy writing a composition on a subject he had given, "The Things That I Love Most." Carelessly he had opened it, carelessly read it, and carelessly tossed it aside. Zita was all aflutter when they handed in their work for he had promised that he would read aloud the best. He went over the piles two times, once again, absently, a deep frown on his brow, as if he was displeased with their works. Then he stopped and picked up one. Her heart sank when she saw that it was not hers; she hardly heard him reading:

"I did not know that the poise and pomp of wealth dies by itself, so quickly. Moths are not supposed to know; they only come to the light. And the light was decorated with diamonds and pearls, exquisitely perfumed, exquisitely tinted, it looked so inviting, there was no resisting it. Moths are not supposed to know; one does not even know one is a moth until one's wings are burned."

It was incomprehensible, no beginning, no end. It did not have unity, coherence, emphasis. Why did he choose that one?

What did he see in it? And she had worked so hard, she had

wanted to please, she had written about the flowers that she loved most. Who could have written it? She did not know that any of her classmates would write so, use such words, sentences, use a blue paper to write her lessons on.

But then there was little in what they could understand. Even his words were so difficult just like those dark and dismaying things that they came across in their readers, which took them hour after hour in the dictionary. She had learned like a good student to pick out the words she did not recognize, writing them down as she heard them, but it was a thankless task. She had a whole notebook filled now, two columns to each page:

esurient . . . greedy

amaranth . . . a flower that never fades

peacock . . . a large bird with lovely green feathers

mirash . . .

The last word was not in the dictionary.

And what did such things as original sin, selfishness, insatiable, actress of a thousand faces mean, and who were Sirce, Lorelay, other names she could not find anywhere? She meant to ask him someday, when his eyes were more kind.

He never went to church, but then, that always went with learning and education, did it not? One night Bue saw him coming out of the dim doorway. He watched again and the following night he saw him again. They would not believe it, they must see it with their own eyes and so they came. He did not go every night, but he could be seen at the most unusual hours, sometimes at dusk, sometimes at dawn, once when it was storming and the lightning stretched a ragged path from heaven to earth. Sometimes he stared for a few minutes, sometimes he came twice or thrice. They reported it to Father Cesario but it seemed that he already knew. "Let a peaceful

man alone in his prayers." The answer surprised them.

* * *

The sky hangs over the Anayat, in the middle of Anayat Sea, like an inverted wineglass, a glass whose wine has been spilled, a purple wine of which Anayat was the last precious drop. For that is Anayat in the crepuscule, purple and mellow, sparkling and warm and effulgent, when there is a moon, cool and heady and sensuous when there is no moon. One may drink of it and forget what lies beyond a thousand miles, beyond a thousand years; one may sip it at the top of a jagged cliff, nearer peace, nearer God. Where one could see the ocean dashing against the rocks in eternal frustration, more moving, more terrible than man's; or touch it to his lips in the lush shadows of the *dama de noche*, it bubbles iridescent like a thousand fireflies, its bouquets the fragrance of flowers that know no fading.

Zita sat by her open window, half asleep, half dreaming. Francisco B. Reteche, what a name! What could his nickname be? Paking. Frank. Pa . . . The night lay silent and expectant, a fairy princess waiting for the whispered words of a lover. She was a bit sleepy. Already she had counted three stars that had fallen to earth, one almost directly into that bush of *dama de noche* at their garden gate, where it had lighted the lamps of a thousand fireflies. He was not so forbidding now; he spoke less frequently to himself, more frequently to her; his eyes were still unseeing, but now they rested on her. She loved to remember those moments when she had caught him looking, when he thought she did not know. The knowledge came keenly, biting, like the sea breeze at dawn, like the prick of the rose's thorn, or — yes like the purple liquid that her father gave visitors during *pintakasi*, which made them red and noisy. She had stolen a few drops one day, because she wanted to know, to taste, and that little sip had made her head whirl.

Suddenly she stiffened; a shadow had emerged from the shrubs and had been lost in the other shadows. Her pulse raced, she strained forward. Was she dreaming? Who was it? A lost soul, an unvoiced thought, the shadow of a shadow, the prince from his tryst with the fairy princess? What were the words that he whispered to her?

* * *

They who have been young once say that only youth can make it forget itself, that life is a river bed. The water passes in it, sometimes it encounters obstacles and cannot go on, sometimes it flows unencumbered with a song in every bubble and ripple, but always it goes forward. When its way is obstructed it burrows deeply or swerves aside and leaves its impression, and whether the impress will be shallow and transient, or deep and searing, only God determines. They remembered the day when he went up Don Eliodoro's house, and the lights of a great decision in his eyes, finally accepted the father's offer to teach his daughter "to be a lady."

"We are going to the City soon, after the next harvest perhaps; I want her not to feel like a *provinciana* when we get there."

They remembered the time when his walks by the seashore became less frequent at night, less solitary, for now of afternoons he would draw the whole crowd of village boys from their game of leapfrog or *patintero* and bring them with him. And they would go home hours after sunset with the wonderful things that Mr. Reteche had told them, why the sea was green, the sky blue, what one who was strong and fearless might find at that exact place where the sky met the sea. They would be flushed and happy and bright-eyed, for he could stand on his head longer than any of them, dig for crabs faster, send a pebble skimming over the breast of Anayat farthest. Turong still

remembered, though dimly, those ominous, terrifying nights when he had got up cold and trembling to listen to the aching groan of the bamboo floor, as somebody in the other room restlessly paced to and fro. And his pupils now remembered those mornings he received their flowers, the *camia* which had fainted away at her own fragrance, the *kamputot*, with the night dew still trembling in its heart, received them with a smile and forgot the lessons of the day and told them all about those princesses and fairies who dwelt in flowers, why the *dama de noche* must have the darkness of the night to set off its fragrance, how the petal of the *ilang-ilang*, crushed and soaked in some liquid, would one day touch the lips of some wondrous creature in some faraway land whose eyes were blue and hair golden.

Those were days of surprise for Zita. Box after box came in Turong's sailboat and each time they were things that took the words from her lips. Silk as sheer and perishable as gossamer, or heavy and sheeny and tinted like the sunset sky, slippers studded with bright stones which tinkled with the least movement of her feet, a necklace of green, flat, polished mineral, whose feel against her throat sent a curious choking sensation there; perfume that she must touch her lips with. If only there would always be such things in Turong's sailboat, and none of those horrid blue envelopes that he always brought. And yet — the Virgin have pity on her selfish soul — suppose Turong brought not only these letters one day but their owner as well? She shuddered, not because she feared it but because she knew it would be.

"Why are these dresses so tight fitting?" Her father wanted to know.

"In society, women use clothes to reveal, not to hide." Was that a sneer or a smile in his eyes? The gown showed her arms and shoulders and she had never known how round and fair

they were, how they could express so many things.

"Why do they have such bright colors?"

"Because the peacock has bright feathers."

"They paint their lips. . . ."

"So that they can smile when they do not want to."

"And their eyelashes are long."

"To hide deception."

He was not pleased like her father; she saw it, he had turned his face toward the window. And as she came nearer, swaying like a lily atop its stalk she heard the harsh, muttered words:

"One would think she'd feel shy or uncomfortable, but no . . . oh no . . . not a bit . . . all alike . . . comes naturally."

There were books to read, pictures, names to learn, lessons in everything, how to polish the nails, how to use the fan, how to walk. How did these days come, how did they go? What does one do when one is so happy, so breathless? Sometimes they were a memory, sometimes a dream.

"Look, Zita, a society girl does not smile so openly; her eyes don't seek one's so — that reveals your true feeling."

"But if I am glad and happy and I want to show it?"

"Don't. If you must show it by smiling, let your eyes be mocking; if you would invite with your eyes, repulse with your lips."

That was a memory.

She was in a great drawing room whose floor was so polished it reflected the myriad red and green and blue lights above, the arches of flowers and ribbons and streamers. All the great names of the capital were there, stately ladies in wonderful gowns who walked so, waved their fans so, who said one thing with their eyes and another with their lips. And she was among

them and every good-looking young man wanted to dance with her. They were all so clever and charming but she answered: "Please, I am tired." For beyond them she had seen him alone, he whose eyes were dark and brooding and disapproving and she was waiting for him to take her.

That was a dream. Sometimes though, she could not tell so easily which was the dream and which the memory.

If only those letters would not bother him now, he seemed so happy and at peace. True, he thought less of them now, never answered them, but every time Turong brought him one, he would become thoughtful and distracted. Like that time he was teaching her a dance, a Spanish dance, he said, and he had told her to dress accordingly. Her heavy hair hung in a big, carelessly tied knot that always threatened to get loose but never did, its dark, deep shadows showing off in startling vividness how red a rose can be, how like velvet its petals. Her earrings — two circlets of precious stones, red like the pigeon's blood — almost touched her shoulders. The heavy Spanish shawl gave her the most trouble — she had nothing to help her but some pictures and magazines — she could not put on just as he wanted. Like this it revealed her shoulder too much; that way it hampered the free movement of the legs. But she had done her best; for hours she had stood before her mirror and for hours it had told her that she was beautiful, that red lips and tragic eyes were becoming to her.

She'd never forget that look in his face when she came out. It was not surprise, joy, admiration. It was as if he saw somebody there whom he was expecting, for whom he had waited, prayed.

"Zita!" It was a cry of recognition.

She blushed even under her rouge when he took her in his arms and taught her to step this way, glide so, turn about; she

looked half questioningly at her father for disapproval, but she saw that there was nothing there but admiration too. Mr. Reteche seemed so serious and intent that she should learn quickly, but he did not deceive her, for once she happened to lean close and she felt how wildly his heart was beating. It had frightened her and she had drawn away but when she saw how unconcerned he was, as if he did not even know that she was in his arms, she smiled knowingly and drew close again. Dreamily she closed her eyes and dimly wondered if his were shut too. Was he thinking the same thoughts, breathing the same prayer?

Turong came up and after his respectful "Good Evening" he handed an envelope to the school teacher. It was large and blue and had a gold design in one corner, the handwriting was broad, angular, sweeping.

"Thank you, Turong." His voice was drawling, heavy, the voice of one who had just awakened. With one movement he tore the unopened envelope, slowly, unconsciously, it seemed to her.

"I thought I had forgotten," he murmured dully.

That changed the whole evening. His eyes lost their sparkle, his gaze wandered from time to time. Something powerful and dark had come in between them, something which shut out the light, brought in a chill. The tears came to her eyes for she felt utterly powerless. When her sight cleared she saw that he was sitting down and trying to piece together the letter.

"Why do you tear letters if you must put them together again?" she asked rebelliously.

He looked at her kindly. "Someday, Zita, you will do it, also, and then you will understand."

* * *

One day Turong came from Pauambang and this time he

brought a stranger. They knew at once that he came from where the teacher came — his clothes, his features, his politeness — and that he had come for the teacher. This one did not speak their dialect, as he was ever wiping his face, gazing at the wobbly, thatched huts and muttering short, vehement phrases to himself. Zita heard his knock before Mr. Reteche did and she knew it was he and for what he had come. She must have been as pale as her teacher, as shaken, as rebellious. And yet the stranger was so cordial, there was nothing but gladness in his greeting, gladness at meeting an old friend. How strong he was; even at that moment he did not forget himself; he turned to his class and dismissed it for the day.

The door was thick and she did not dare lean against the jamb too much, so something of their voices floated away before they reached her.

"... like children ... making yourselves ... so unhappy."

"... happiness? Her idea of happiness ..."

Mr. Reteche's voice was more low-pitched, hoarse, so that it didn't carry at all. She shuddered as he laughed: it was that way when he first came.

"She's been ... did not mean ... understand."

"... learning to forget ..."

There were periods when they both became excited and talked fast and hard. She heard somebody's restless pacing, somebody sitting down heavily.

"I never realized what she meant to me until I begin trying to seek from others what she cannot give me."

She knew what was coming now, knew it before the stranger asked the question:

"Tomorrow?"

She fled. She could not wait for the answer.

He did not sleep that night. She knew he did not, she told herself fiercely. And it was not only his preparations that kept him awake: she knew it, *she knew it*. With the first flicker of light she ran to the mirror. She must not show her feelings, it was not in good form, she must manage somehow. If her lips quivered, her eyes must smile, if in her eyes there were tears . . . She heard her father go out, but she did not go, although she knew his purpose. She had more important things to do. Little boys came up to their house and she wiped away their tears and told them that he was coming back — coming back, soon, soon.

The minutes flew. She was almost done now. Her lips were red and her eyebrows penciled; the crimson shawl wrapped on just right. Everything must be like that day he had first seen her in a Spanish dress. Still he did not come; he must be bidding farewell now to Father Cesario, now he was in Dona Ramona's house, now he was shaking the barber's hands. He would soon be through and retrace his steps ~~back~~ to their house. She glanced at the mirror and decided that her lips were not red enough; she put on more color. The rose in her hair had too long a stem; she tried to trim it with her fingers and a thorn dug deeply into her flesh.

Who knows? Perhaps they would soon meet again in the city. She wondered if she could not wheedle her father into going earlier. But she must know now. What were the words he wanted to whisper that night under the *dama de noche*? What did he want to say that day he held her in his arms? Other things, questions whose answers she knew. How well she knew them!

The big house was silent as death; the little village seemed deserted. Everybody had gone to the seashore. Again she looked at the mirror. She was too pale; she must put on more rouge. She tried to keep from counting the minutes, the

seconds, from getting up and pacing. But she was getting chilly and she must do it to keep warm.

The steps creaked. She bit her lips to stifle a wild cry. The door opened.

"Turong!"

"Mr. Reteche bade me to give this. He said you would understand."

In one bound she had reached the open window. But dimly, for the sun was too bright — or was her sight failing? — she saw the blur of white moving this way, moving that way, turning around so that she could not follow it, and clearly against a horizon suddenly drawn out of perspective, Mr. Reteche, tall, lean, brooding, looking at her with eyes that told her somebody had hurt him. It was like that when he first came, and he was gone. The tears came freely now. What matter, what matter? There was nobody to see and criticize her breeding. They came down unchecked and when she tried to brush them off with her hand, the color came away from her cheeks, leaving them bloodless, cold. Sometimes they got into her mouth and they tasted bitter.

Her hands worked convulsively; there was a sound of tearing paper, once, twice. She became suddenly aware of what she had done when she looked at the pieces, wet and brightly stained with uneven streaks of red. Slowly, painfully, she tried to put the pieces together and as she did so a sob escaped deep from her breast — a great understanding had come to her.

Amador Daguis

Wedding Dance

Awiyo reached for the upper horizontal log which served as the edge of the head-high threshold. Clinging to the log, he lifted himself with one bound that carried him across to the narrow door. He slid back the cover, stepped inside, then pushed the cover back in place. After some moments during which he seemed to wait, he talked to the listening darkness.

"I'm sorry this had to be done. I am really sorry. But neither of us can help it."

The sound of the gangsas beat through the walls of the dark house, like muffled roars of falling waters. The woman who had moved with a start when the sliding door opened had been hearing the gangsas for she did not know how long. The sudden rush of the rich sounds when the door opened was like a sharp gush of fire in her. She gave no sign that she heard Awiyo, but continued to sit unmoving in the darkness.

"Why don't you go out," he said, "and join the dancing women?" He felt a pang inside him, because what he said was not really the right thing to say and because the woman did not stir. "You should join the dancers," he said, "as if — as if nothing has happened." He looked at the woman huddled in a corner of

the room, leaning against the wall. The stove fire played with strange moving shadows and lights upon her face. She was partly sullen, but her sullenness was not because of anger or hate.

"Go out — go out and dance. If you really don't hate me for this segregation, go out and dance. One of the men will see you dance well; he will like your dancing; he will marry you. Who knows but that, with him, you will be luckier than you were with me."

"I don't want any man," she said sharply. "I don't want any other man."

He felt relieved that at least she talked: "You know very well that I don't want any other woman, either. You know that, don't you? Lumnay, you know it, don't you?"

She did not answer him.

"You know it, Lumnay, don't you?" he repeated.

"Yes, I know," she said weakly.

"It is not my fault," he said, feeling relieved. "You cannot blame me; I have been a good husband to you."

"Neither can you blame me," she said. She seemed about to cry.

"No, you have been very good to me. You have been a good wife. I have nothing to say against you." He set some of the burning wood in place. "It's only that a man must have a child. Seven harvests is just too long to wait. Yes, we have waited too long. We should have another chance before it is too late for both of us."

This time the woman stirred, stretched her right leg out and bent her left leg in. She wound the blankets more snugly around herself.

"You know that I have done my best," she said. "I have prayed to Kabunyan much. I have sacrificed many chickens in my prayers."

"Yes, I know."

"You remember how angry you were once when you came home from your work in the terrace because I butchered one of our pigs without your permission? I did it to appease Kabunyan, because, like you, I wanted to have a child. But what could I do?"

"Kabunyan does not see fit for us to have a child," he said. He stirred the fire. The sparks rose through the crackles of the flames. The smoke and soot went up to the ceiling.

Lumnay looked down and unconsciously started to pull the rattan that kept the split bamboo flooring in place. She tugged at the rattan flooring. Each time she did this the split bamboo went up and came down with a slight rattle. The gongs of the dancers clamorously called in her ears through the walls.

Awiyao went to the corner where Lumnay sat, paused before her, looked at her bronzed and sturdy face, then turned to where the jars of water stood piled one over the other. Awiyao took a coconut cup and dipped it in the top jar and drank. Lumnay had filled the jars from the mountain creek early that evening.

"I came home," he said, "because I did not find you among the dancers. Of course, I am not forcing you to come, if you don't want to join my wedding ceremony. I came to tell you that Madulimay, altho' I am marrying her, can never become as good as you are. She is not as strong in planting beans, nor as fast in cleaning water jars, not as good in keeping a house clean. You are one of the best wives in the whole village."

"That has not done me any good, has it?" she said. She

looked at him lovingly. She almost seemed to smile.

He put the coconut cup aside on the floor and came closer to her. He held her face between his hands, and looked longingly at her beauty. But her eyes looked away. Never again would he hold her face. The next day she would not be his anymore. She would go back to her parents. He let go of her face, and she bent to the floor again and looked at her fingers as they tugged softly at the split bamboo floor.

"This house is yours," he said, "I built it for you. Make it your own, live in it as long as you wish. I will build another house for Madulimay."

"I have no need for a house," she said slowly. "I'll go to my own house. My parents are old. They will need help in the planting of the beans, in the pounding of the rice."

"I will give you the field that I dug out of the mountain during the first year of our marriage," he said. "You know I did it for you. You helped me to make it for the two of us."

"I have no use for any field," she said.

He looked at her, then turned away, and became silent. They were silent for a time.

"Go back to the dance," she said finally. "It is not right for you to be here. They will wonder where you are, and Madulimay will not feel good. Go back to the dance."

"I would feel better if you would come, and dance — for the last time. The *gongsas* are playing."

"You know that I cannot."

"Lumnay," he said tenderly. "Lumnay, if I did this it is because of my need for a child. You know that life is not worth living without a child. The men have mocked me behind my back. You know that."

"I know it," she said. "I will pray that Kabunyan will bless you and Madulimay."

She bit her lips now, then shook her head wildly, and sobbed.

She thought of the seven harvests that had passed, the high hopes they had in the beginning of their new life, the day he took her away from her parents across the roaring river, on the other side of the mountain, the trip up the trail which they had to cross — the waters boiled in her mind in foams of white and jade and roaring silver; the waters rolled and growled, resounded in thunderous echoes through the walls of the stiff cliffs; they were far away now but loud still and receding; the waters violently smashed down from somewhere on the tops of the other ranges, and they had looked carefully at the buttresses of rocks they had to step on — a slip would have meant death.

They both drank the water, then rested on the other bank before they made the final climb to the other side of the mountain.

She looked at his face with the fire playing upon his features — hard and strong, and kind. He had a sense of lightness in his way of saying things, which often made her and the village people laugh. How proud she had been of his humor. The muscles were taut and firm, bronze and compact in their hold upon his skull — how frank his bright eyes were. She looked at his body that carved out of the mountains five fields for her; his wide and supple torso heaved as if a slab of shining lumber were heaving; his arms and legs flowed with fluent muscles — he was strong and for that she had lost him.

She flung herself upon his knees and clung to them. "Awi Yao, Awi Yao, my husband," she cried. "I did everything to have a child," she said passionately in a hoarse whisper. "Look at me," she cried. "Look at my body. Then it was full of promise. It could dance; it could work fast in the fields; it could climb the

mountains fast. Even now it is firm, full. But, Awiyao, Kabunyan never blessed me. Awiyao, Kabunyan is cruel to me. Awiyao, I am useless. I must die."

"It will not be right to die," he said, gathering her in his arms. Her whole warm naked breast quivered against his own; she clung now to his neck, and her hair flowed down in cascades of gleaming darkness.

"I don't care about the fields," she said. "I don't care about the house. I don't care for anything but you. I'll have no other man."

"Then you'll always be fruitless."

"I'll go back to my father. I'll die."

"Then you hate me," he said. "If you die it means you hate me. You do not want me to have a child. You do not want my name to live on in our tribe."

She was silent.

"If I do not try a second time," he explained, "it means I'll die. Nobody will get the fields I have carved out of the mountains; nobody will come after me."

"If you fail — if you fail this second time —" she said thoughtfully. Then her voice was a shudder. "No — no, I don't want you to fail."

"If I fail," he said, "I'll come back to you. Then both of us will die together. Both of us will vanish from the life of our tribes."

The gongs thundered through the walls of their house, sonorous and far away.

"I'll keep my beads," she said. "Awiyao, let me keep my beads," she half-whispered.

"You will keep the beads. They come from far-off times. My grandmother said they came from way up North, from the

slant-eyed people across the sea. You keep them, Lumnay. They are worth twenty fields."

"I'll keep them because they stand for the love you have for me," she said. "I love you and have nothing to give."

She took herself away from him, for a voice was calling out to him from outside. "Awiyao! Awiyao! O Awiyao! They are looking for you at the dance!"

"I'm not in a hurry."

"The elders will scold you. You had better go."

"Not until you tell me that it is all right with you."

"It is all right with me."

He went to the door.

"Awiyao!"

He stopped as if suddenly hit by a spear. In pain he turned to her. Her face was agony. It pained him to leave. She had been wonderful to him. What was it that made a man wish for a child? What was it in life, in the work in the fields, in the planting and harvest, in the silence of the night, in the communings with husband and wife, in the whole life of the tribe itself that made man wish for the laughter and speech of a child? Suppose he changed his mind? Why did the unwritten law demand, anyway, that a man, to be a man, must have a child to come after him? And if he was fruitless — but he loved Lumnay. It was like taking away half of his life to leave her like this.

"Awiyao," she said, and her eyes seemed to smile in the light.

"The beads!"

He turned back and walked to the farthest corner of their room, to the trunk where they kept their worldly possessions — his battle-axe and his spear points, her betelnut box and her beads. He dug out from the darkness the beads which had been

given to him by his grandmother to give to Lumnay on the day of his marriage. He went to her, lifted her head, put the beads on, and tied them in place. The white and jade and deep orange obsidians shone in the firelight. She suddenly clung to him, clung to his neck, as if she would never let him go.

"Awiyao! Awiyao, it is hard!" She gasped, and she closed her eyes and buried her face in his neck.

The call for him from the outside repeated; her grip loosened, and he hurried out into the night.

Lumnay sat for some time in the darkness. Then she went to the door and opened it. The moonlight struck her face; the moonlight spilled itself upon the whole village.

She could hear the throbbing of the gangsas coming to her through the caverns of the other houses. She knew that all the houses were empty; that the whole tribe was at the dance. Only she was absent. And yet was she not the best dancer of the village? Did she not have the most lightness and grace? Could she not, alone among all the women, dance like a bird tripping for grains on the ground, beautifully timed to the beat of the gangsas? Did not the men praise her supple body, and the women envy the way she stretched her hands like the wings of the mountain eagle now and then as she danced? How long ago did she dance at her own wedding? Tonight, all the women who counted, who once danced in her honor were now dancing in honor of another whose only claim was that perhaps she could give her husband a child.

"It is not right. It is not right!" she cried. "How does she know? How can anyone know? It is not right," she said.

Suddenly she found courage. She would go to the dance. She would go to the chief of the village, to the elders, to tell them it was not right. Awiyao was hers; nobody could take him away from her. Let her be the first woman to complain, to denounce

the unwritten rule that a man may take another woman. She would break the dancing of the men and women. She would tell Awiyao to come back to her. He surely would relent. Was not their love as strong as the river?

She made for the other side of the village where the dancing was. There was a flaming glow over the whole place; a great bonfire was burning. The gangsas clamored more loudly now, and it seemed they were calling to her. She was near at last. She could see the dancers clearly now. The men leaped lightly with their gangsas as they circled the dancing women decked in feast garments and beads, tripping on the ground like graceful birds, following their men. Her heart warmed to the flaming call of the dance; strange heat in her blood welled up, and she started to run.

But the flaming brightness of the bonfire commanded her to stop. Did anybody see her approach? She stopped. What if somebody had seen her coming? The flames of the bonfire leaped in countless sparks which spread and rose like yellow points and died out in the night. The blaze reached out to her like a spreading radiance. She did not have the courage to break into the wedding feast.

Lumnay walked away from the dancing ground, away from the village. She thought of the new clearing of beans which Awiyao and she had started to make only four moons before. She followed the trail above the village.

When she came to the mountain stream she crossed it carefully. Nobody held her hands, and the stream water was very cold. The trail went up again, and she was in the moonlight shadows among the trees and shrubs. Slowly she climbed the mountain.

When Lumnay reached the clearing, she could see from where she stood the blazing bonfire at the edge of the village,

where the dancing was. She could hear the far-off clamor of the gongs, still rich in their sonorousness, echoing from mountain to mountain. The sound did not mock her; they seemed to call far to her; speak to her in the language of unspeaking love. She felt the pull of their clamor, almost the feeling that they were telling to her their gratitude for her sacrifice. Her heart beat began to sound to her like many gangsas.

Lumnay thought of Awiyao she had known long ago — a strong, muscular boy carrying his heavy loads of fuel logs down the mountains to his home. She had met him one day as she was on her way to fill her clay jars with water. He had stopped at the spring to drink and rest; and she had made him drink the cool mountain water from her coconut shell. After that it did not take him long to decide to throw his spear on the stairs of her father's house in token of his desire to marry her.

The mountain clearing was cold in the freezing moonlight. The wind began to sigh and stir the leaves of the bean plants. Lumnay looked for a big rock on which to sit down. The beans now surrounded her, and she was lost among them.

A few more weeks, a few more months, a few more harvests — what did it matter? She would be holding the bean flowers, soft in the texture, silken almost, but moist where the dew got into them, silver to look at, silver on the light blue, blooming whiteness, when the morning comes. The stretching of the bean pods full length from the hearts of the wilting petals would go on.

Lumnay's fingers moved a long, long time among the growing bean pods.

J. C. Tuvera

Ceremony

Sometimes for hours he lay in his room and swam in a hot heavy blue-white mist. But in the end he always came out of it and found himself safely back in bed, surprised that it was actually cold. He had scarcely moved; the pillows and the folded sheet, which seemed to roll and heave and churn with him in the steaming mist, would be under him again — how they shocked him with their sudden comfort. When he eased himself down into the full length of the bed, he saw with a fresh surprise that evening had fallen. His sister was in her chair by the window; as usual, she had drawn back the curtains that earlier shielded the room from the sun. From the santol tree beyond the window a lively breeze stirred and, strolling down into the room, caught the perfume from his sister's body.

All would be real again.

Each day Elisa was gone from the house early in the afternoon — it was the summer, she had come home from school in the city, and an adult class in town had been opened: "I have been asked to teach those old folks," she said, one Saturday during the vacation, and since then she would be away half of the day. While she was gone, his mother took over

the chores; after Elisa had left, the old woman would look in around the half-opened door, making sure he was not up again, and in a moment he would hear the clink of glass as she poured herself some of the stealthy gin she kept away in the kitchen. It would be some time before he heard her stirring in the house again, pouring rice grains into a small winnowing basket, then pounding leaves in a small mortar.

It had been an unusual sound once: he was in bed, where Elisa had left him with a piece of damp cloth on his forehead, when suddenly from the kitchen he heard his mother moving the rice bin from a corner. At that hour, after lunch, it was always too quiet in the house; the bottom of the rice bin scraped coarsely against the floor, sending fast glassy darts of noise that dug at his nerves and left chilling sensations in the roots of his teeth. Although sound wrenched him away from coming sleep, a pleased feeling came over him — she is transferring her liquor bottle into the rice bin, he exulted. It was something to tell Elisa. So this is where you have been keeping it, his sister would say, waving the bottle in the air, and a smile came to his face as he imagined his mother staring, helpless and unbelieving, at his triumphant sister.

He had left his bed quietly and walked on feeble legs to the door — but here he had watched, disappointed, while his mother scooped rice from the bin instead and dropped them into a winnowing basket. She is not going to cook again, he thought, and a wild fear had come over him — was she going insane?

In a rush of pain he had remembered the little changes that had come over his mother; quicker than thought, the fierce anxiety brought him back again to the time when his mother was not gaunt and aged and the dress did not hang loosely. In this time there was a rain-darkened day: about the rain, especially, he was certain; his mother had run to the windows,

equipped with the water streaming in under the window shutters, while in his bed he watched the doctor's face as he bent over him — did he wear glasses, or a moustache? It was queer how things like that could return to the mind and yet stay vague and undefined, although the doctor had come back to the house again and again, each time with the same frowning portentous face: "It's rheumatic fever, it will always be in the bones. And in the heart." The heart. Although the fever recurred month after month, to lay siege upon him so that for ten slowly-growing years he never left the house again, it never really failed, as his father's heart had. One day he heard the long, tearing shriek, listened to it break and scatter into sobs in the next room and then collect itself again into a wail: when at last he had managed to bring himself away to the other room Ensa was already there, clutching at his grief-stricken mother with all the strength of her eighteen years, pulling her away from the fat, limp, dead body on the floor. It was such a long time only that image stood out; somehow the others just whirled and eddied about, liquidly. Only with a special, other thought could he recognize again the sad, young, suddenly strange face of his sister when she waved back from the gate the day she left for the city; the startling change each time she came home in summer, her figure no longer a mere girl's as she stood at the door beside their mother's small, aged body.

He realized he was remembering all these for the first time when on that day, from his door, he had stood watching his mother dropping a handful of rice grains into a basket. She had not turned once. Curiously engrossed, she had picked up a bundle of leaves he had not noticed before and walked to the small, stone mortar by the table. As she had begun to pound the leaves, he turned back to his bed, feeling sullen and oppressed; with a still cry in his throat he realized what his mother was doing — she had finally summoned that old, female quack!

And all behind Elisa's back, he had muttered. Although Elisa had fumed at his mother when he told her about it, Apo Caddi had continued to come each day, arriving soon after his sister had left her adult calss. He had learned the ritual by heart. His mother would apply the crushed leaves on his joints, keeping them under bandage, until Apo Caddi came and removed them with a special, murmurous prayer. Then she would pick up the rice grains slowly, with each meticulous motion of her arm, raise her eyes to the ceiling, touch the grain to the tip of her tongue, and in a final flourish drop it into a bowl of unchanged water. When the random grains had all gone into the bowl, she would spread her old shawl over the momentous dish and, falling into a magnificent trance, would recite thirteen Ave Marias in rapid monotone.

He had protested and fought. Today, even as the session was about to begin, he had also threatened — how comic and feeble he must have sounded, yelling that he would walk out of the house and never come home again. But as in all the other days, friendless and alone, with Elisa nowhere in sight, he was overpowered with the two women's own pleas and threats, and the session began again.

And when the grains are thrown, his mother said, you must not forget to say *bari-bari*. Say it to the wind, she said reverently, jerking her head up to the window, for the evil spirits to hear. When Apo Caddi rose and strewed the rice grains into the yard below the window, his mother was still talking at him: that will drive them away, she was saying.

Now, after murmuring the magic words, Apo Caddi touched his forehead with a pair of wet fingers and made her way to the door. He watched her go, hating her every movement, oppressed by even her reassuring voice as she gestured cheerfully to his mother and said, "Already he has improved, don't you see? Maybe tomorrow it will all be over." Before she

turned into the stairs, Junior had risen from the rocking chair and had begun to bring himself back into his room. It was at his own door that he heard Apo Caddi again, her voice carrying in a thin and stringy cackle. Stopping briefly to rest, holding himself up by the door knob, he pictured the old woman as she tarried on the stone path, her face turned from the angle of sun and nodding instructions at his mother. "Just remember — we try thirteen grains tomorrow. And don't choose, don't choose them at all."

Or you will offend the spirits, Junior mimicked silently, before she could say the usual solemn words.

She started coming in March, here the summer was ending, and tomorrow she was coming again for what did not promise to be the last time. "You will be strong again just as soon as the grains stay afloat," she had promised a dozen times, "For that shall be the sign." Today, flinging the shawl from the bowl, she had revealed but four floating grains. In the solemn quiet of the room, while his mother leaned forward anxiously to verify the count, Apo Caddi had risen from her haunches and, bowl in hand, sauntered over to the window. "Well, it's less than last week's count, indeed," she had said, making a chuckle with some ostentation, "but it's too soon, really. And God is God. All of a sudden He begins to act. Who can say — maybe tomorrow all the grains will be floating perfectly." And dipping her hand into the bowl: "That's why everything must be right. Thirteen Ave Marias . . ."

"Say *bari-bari*," his mother had interrupted, as Apo Caddi began to throw her grains.

" . . . and always the same water," Apo Caddi said, on her way out at the gate, and Junior walked on again, distress and anger lifting his enfeebled legs as he strained to reach his bed.

"I wish Elisa were here at last," he murmured; but in an

instant the thought was lost, and the image of his older sister paled away as familiar omens of pain wriggled alive in his legs again. His face was flushed: the anger, kept back too long, looked suddenly as though it were to be quenched only by crying, but it stayed on, composed and tearless, a small fate in the balance, and he made a quick effort instead to make the last few steps to the bed. Beside his table he bent over too soon to secure a hold on the nearest edge, and his hand, flying in a blind arc, knocked a vase of paper roses off the side.

There was a crash as the vase fell and burst out through the fragments of glass and settled in little mounds beside the bed. The sudden violence seemed curiously to soothe, shocking the small aches into hiding; dropping himself with insolent vengeance upon the bed, he aimed a foot at a fallen flower, caught it, and sent it loping far across to the end of the room. When it was quiet again, he was certain that among the last sounds he had heard was the voice of his mother as she talked to herself aloud, wondering where she had left her bottle of gin.

His mother appeared at the door.

"Did you hear any sound?" she asked, putting her head farther in around the door. The familiar, exultant look of anticipation played in her eyes as she fondled the liquor bottle in her hands; but soon she looked around, in a dull gaze took in the room, and heaved a loud sigh as her eyes fell upon the broken vase.

"Why," she began, and changing her mind she disappeared from the door. Junior took his eyes from the mess on the floor, where they had followed his mother's gaze, and stared at his shriveled body, at the shrunken flesh and the bony elbows and thin fingers that now still trembled from the exhausting trip through the living room. There was an offending pallor on his skin where the leaves had been. Instantly he dreaded the

coming moment when his mother returned into the room: two ghosts, he thought, feeling wicked, and now once more his eyes ran wildly over the elfin arms, along the dwarfed and bony legs with their enormous knees, and the listless thought tramped back again from the spent emotions of many years — disease, he muttered, ten years of disease!

His mother returned, dragging a broom, and immediately she began to sweep off the sand and the scattered fragments of the vase.

He turned away, facing the wall, and when his mother talked ("I hope your Apo Caddi is blessed soon," she sighed, and he felt her looking hopefully at him), he had already made up his mind that he would not talk to her. He closed his eyes, how tired he was from it all, and sensed his mother moving about. He knew when she bent farther down and jabbed the broom at the floor to dislodge glass fragments that lay embedded in rough hollows. He heard the rustle of the fallen paper flowers while she collected them into a heap, by the sudden stillness felt her stretch from her ancient waist and soothe it as all her body ached into a fit of shaking.

When she began to move again, her stirring seemed to be more remote, the body that he sensed beside him stole away behind his eyes and flitted off to meet the mist coming through the walls. In his sleep shadows fled quickly from the corners of the room and from curtain folds that loomed into small billows with a fast wind, and for a moment the room seemed to spread out and become itself, safe and familiar: chair and table and bed assumed its place, the calendar leaped back into untidy prominence on the east wall, his sister's picture stood in its reclining frame on the table. Steadily the mist thickened and rose in swirls, steaming into the woodgrains of the beams and the brown thrust of unceilinged roof; his father sat on thick

haunches on a wood bar and somewhere he heard the sound of hooves, although he was sure it was the noise of a river that rushed, flooded, at the edge of the roofs. In a moment his mother strode away from the river, miraculously dry, and miraculously, with thin and feeble hands, she drew out a heavy bundle from inside her loose dress. He saw himself move inside the bundle and then recoil, like a man struck, from his father's hand, in the instant before the roof opened and Elisa ran up screaming as another sheet of hot, heavy blue-white mist moved down from the sky.

He heard the click of the switch, and when he opened his eyes he saw the light leap on the wall before his face. An early evening breeze came into the room, there was a suggestion of his sister's favorite scent, and he knew Elisa was home at last. From a window in the next house a voice heaved suddenly into song and at the back of his mind, Junior remembered it was Pablo, every evening he always sang so, picking tunes up from the radio. But almost at once he forgot the voice again.

He waited until he heard Elisa take the seat by the window, before he turned, his bones in pain, and faced her.

"I woke you up," she said, regretfully, and rose from her chair. Then, changing her mind, she held the furniture again and dragged it closer to his bed.

"I have slept too long," he said, as she sat down again. Consciously, he followed Elisa's fingers as they unstrapped her watch and laid it carefully on the table. She stretched and leaned back lazily, resting herself and against the harsh, steady light his eyes marked the arms as they swept and curved to form a cushion under her head, with the same glance saw the smooth grace of her legs as they crossed and pushed out a creaminess through her stockings.

"Mother has been drinking again," she said. Then he thought

he saw dejection moisten to a warm and angered love in her eyes as she dropped her arms and added: "And she has been at you with Apo Caddi again. I know. I saw the unused leaves."

He had dropped his gaze to the floor, embarrassed that like other times he had not been able to resist his mother, but he glanced up at her again when she uncrossed a leg, dropped it noisily on the floor, then propped it up on a bar under the table. Between her quick motions the hem of her dress slid back and permitted a flash of whiteness under her black chemise.

"I would not have left," she said. "Maybe it was not necessary. But they expected me at the closing exercises."

He had almost forgotten that her adult classes ended today. With a faint hope he looked up at her face and smiled brightly.

"It does not matter," he said. "After today you are staying home all day."

From now on, he thought, it will be just sympathy. He knew her face only too well: he watched the look of emotion disappear from her eyes and in its place, composing itself around the pupils and spreading out to her cheeks and mouth, there rose the old, mock-stern, grown-up wisdom, the presence of mind that he had to wear through days of responsibility.

"Oh, Junior," she said, "we have been through all that before. It's only a year more. I must go back."

In the next house Pablo had changed to a new song, his voice lifting to a high crying tone, and with a feigned look of rapture Elisa turned to her brother and smiled.

"I can ask Pablo to come here often," she said. "You two must try to sing together."

"I wish you didn't have to leave," he said, ignoring her. Quietly, the smile still in her face, she looked at him — no, over me, he thought; already her mind must be in her school in the

city, where she was going back after two more days, and a deep torrid flush raced through him. "If you aren't teaching here," he said hotly, "you are away in the city."

And why can't she stay home, a lost voice cried: the summer had been such a perfect time! Mornings, she had gone down with him to the splotch of lawn in the yard: "It's only the heart now," the doctor had said in one of his rare visits. "And the bones — if he can only walk around more often, they might recover slowly." It had failed the first day: Elisa was helping down the stairs when, after the top rung, he had suddenly quailed and turned back. But on the next it had been better. They reached the ground after what had seemed like hours, and there at last he marvelled at the changed world. How broad the sky had looked! Afterwards each stone and stray mound of grass suggested a separate meaningful day. A splinter of old rock in the middle of the lawn stood for the morning he and Elisa had first ventured out beyond the base of the stairway. An odd shape of grass patch by the fence he could remember for the time an unseasonable shower fell about them. Strangely it was she who had caught a cold, she had thrown herself about him so, protecting him from the small rain while she struggled with half his weight and hustled him off to the shelter of the eaves and for days they had not gone down again until suddenly it was his twentieth birthday one morning and they had returned and walked about the yard hand in hand.

"The insurance money is almost gone" she said. "I told you. If I don't go back this year I'll never be able to, again." With her voice he was back into the room; once more his old, low, narrow world closed about him.

"After this year I can teach. It will be better then."

"Here?" he said and he felt the hotness come again.

"Here," she said.

"Yes," he mocked. "Here. And you will be married."

"Maybe not," she said. Then: "I hope not." Suddenly, he thought, her voice had grown feeble, unsure. It's true then, he cried wildly in his heart, and his eyes burned towards her. All the years she had been away it was true — and why did she always send off letters in summer?

Despite himself he turned to her meekly again. The final, pleading words came to his lips and without hesitation he spoke them aloud. "*I can't stand mother any longer,*" he said, speaking each word with a slow, studied clarity.

From his hands her eyes went to his face, and when they met his he knew she understood.

"Yes," she said, standing up. "It must be difficult." For a long while she stood by the window, staring into the night while a breeze carried strains of Pablo's song and played in her hair. Then slowly she walked back to his side.

"I only wish she stopped drinking," she said, "and began looking after you."

"And Apo Caddi," he added, as though now he must at last count all the untold ills. "I wish I could hurt her," he muttered.

"I'll talk to mother about it again," Elisa said.

He had begun to raise himself from the elbows painfully, but Elisa moved closer suddenly and, stopping him with an upraised arm, picked up her watch with the other hand. She stepped to his side and pushed him gently back into the bed. Her perfume hovered thickly about him, a fold of her dress touched his face, and as though a false bottom the anger fell and disappeared. Before she could turn and leave him, he had seized her hand and with a torrent of unintelligible sounds was pressing it tightly in his own, hurting her fingers as he clutched them and pressed them savagely against his quivering mouth.

With a wild surprise she pulled herself away, tearing her hand from his tight clasp. But in the next instant she stepped close to him again, brave and composed, and in her turn held his hand.

"Don't you see that I must go?" she said, feeling that his hand had turned cold. He kept still. When the sound of Pablo's song came through the uneasy silence, he felt it was some final and absolute sign: he is singing to her, he thought, and a large, close, wounded thought flamed in his mind.

"I hate it all here," he said. "In this house. And I can't bear to see you leave again."

In a rush the words tumbled from her. "I know," she said. "I know." Then abruptly she bent and touched her lips to his face, in the moment when a spurt of song heaved afresh from the night and then sobbing she fled swiftly from the room.

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Gregorio C. Brillantes

What Shall We Do When We All Go Out?

The year was first of all the strangeness of a new town, a railroad station on a day in June, with the rain falling and the steam breath of the train engine blue in the grey air, and riding in a *carretela* with his father and mother through tunnels of leaves to the house by the river. Then in a bright morning, the whirl of grasshoppers deep in the damp grass of the plaza, the long sprawling schoolhouse, the nameless faces, the fresh mud smell of the corridor and the bell's urgent ringing as his father waved, winking and smiling, going away down the steps. Room 10 was a sudden loneliness. Through the windows there was a view of mountains, dark-blue and infinitely far, they seemed; one might try to journey toward them, across countless plains, day and night, and never reach them because they receded into the horizon perpetually; and seated at his desk in the room with the unknown children, he imagined himself lost somewhere in that impossible distance. At noon the day darkened and rained, and his father came and they left together, sharing a raincoat, walking down the soft cool raining streets of the town.

Grade Three was Miss Castillo, the ruler in her hand pointing, rapping the table, tapping the blackboard, Writing, Arithmetic, her voice sometimes tired, sometimes harsh, but often happy,

even laughing, and leading the class in song, a warm and vibrant voice; and the year, too, was the typhoon skies of July and August, the thick greenness of the plaza, new friends, Vic, Junior, Kiko, Doming, matchboxes of spiders, marbles, airplane model cut-outs, color prints of cowboy stars, the odors of ink and chalk, the twin flags fluttering over the schoolhouse, and the hot lemon sun between the long rains.

He was nine years old now, an only child, thin and pensive and capable of outbursts of intense energy, his mop of hair shaking loose over his eyes. He liked the town more than the previous ones they had lived in; there were two moviehouses and high school cadets drilling in the plaza and Bombay bazaars on the main street; cascoes came down the huge river and the train whistles said come to the city, come; and listening to the fading machine rumble in the night, he felt a pang of waiting for dreams he could not touch with words. His father clerked in the treasurer's office, in the municipal hall, a neat tile-roofed building surrounded by great acacias; and in the mornings they would leave the house together, side by side, the boy trying to match his father's stride, brisk and certain, across the bridge with its massive iron girders, the boats bobbing on the flashing water, Rizal Street streaming noisily with children hurrying to school. Remembering the other town, the tiny crumbling schoolhouse, the stillness under the dusty palms, he wished fervently that his father would not be assigned again to work elsewhere. In the backyard of the house his father had taken, there was a santol tree with branches miraculously arranged for a young boy's easy climbing, and from a comfortable perch secret among the leaves, he could see a bend of the river and a part of the main street, and he could play at being an eagle or the pilot of a fighter plane. The house itself, which they shared with a family, was pleasant enough: it had a porch shaded by a morning-glory vine, and through the wide kitchen window one

looked out on a checker-board of fields, and on the edge of the world the glint of rails, the train crawling small as a toy but its power trembling through your arms on the windowsill. He would wave to the passengers, although he knew he was too far to be seen, and fancy himself on the train too, counting the telegraph poles going by, faster, almost blurring together, finally slowing down, the city rising about him, vast and mysterious.

He had a plot behind the school building and planted pechay and tomatoes and eggplants, in a row of similar plots like fresh graves, the names printed on placards set in the dark soil like little crosses. October came, and winds blew cool cotton clouds through the sky, the cloud-shadows passing swift on the ground, over the rooftops, on the church and the *convento*, the trees, the river. Fascinated, he would pause during a game at recess to watch the shadows racing across the schoolyard, gone in a twinkling, dissolving toward the mountains, the unseen places.

In Room 10, with the stern portraits of heroes watchful on the walls, under the thumb-tacked cardboard slogans, he added and multiplied and divided sums gradually growing complex, recited patriotic poems, sang the children's songs about the ripe guavas and Maria going to town. At a program for visiting school officials, he was one of the group of unwilling boys that did a folk dance; and only Miss Castillo's gift of chocolate candy relaxed his rebellion enough for him to go through the steps with passable grace. His favorite subject was Geography, for in the large blue-covered book was the tang of the oceans, and the mists of valleys, the proud names of countries. It seemed then that all of the world became familiar and near, the way it was with the town, its regions explored and made his own, the woods behind the *convento*, the riverbank, the shortcuts to school, known and therefore free of danger. A photographer came with his black shrouded camera and took a picture of the

class ranged on the front steps, with him in the front row with Miss Castillo because he was among the bright ones. In the picture his face had a tense, almost belligerent look. "Remember to smile next time," his mother said.

A classmate named Jaime had been absent for more than a week, and one morning Miss Castillo said, "Jaime is dead." The room drained of sound and from the other wing of the building filtered faint voices like murmurs, and in the next room a girl recited on in a sing-song tone. The teacher's announcement seemed to hang in the unstirring room for a long time, and he noted a fly buzzing on a wall. The awesome fearful word sank slowly into his understanding, and brought a thrill of terror to his heart. He stared at the vacant desk and he experienced again as on the first day of class, a sense of mountains unreachable forever, while a pressure weighed against his ears and hummed remotely in the quiet room.

In the afternoon the class trooped to Jaime's house, a dim sagging nipa shack on the outer edge of town. Everyone spoke in hushed careful voices, as if an immense calamity would claim them all at once if they showed the slightest disrespect. He looked at Jaime's lightless eyes and chalk lips and quickly turned away, a bewildered shock dry in his throat. He had known the dead boy but slightly: a sullen face, a shrill laugh, the frayed faded clothes of the very poor, that was all; and Jaime was more alien now, a complete stranger. The crowded house oppressed him, it would bury him in its darkness; and he sought out Junior and Doming and they went down the ladder to the yard and sat there on the roots of an old tree, not talking, until their teacher came and told them they could go home. In the rapid dusk, they ran as if pursued, panting into the more familiar quarter of town, where the streetlights were, the bustle of *carretelas*, the stores.

He dreamed one night of Jaime alive, Jaime's mouth forming words, but without sound, trying to talk, his hands gesturing desperately; but there was no telling what it was he wanted to say. "What has happened to your voice?" he asked Jaime in the dream, and then they were in the classroom and Jaime stood before them, speechless, his eyes pleading and helpless. The bell signaled the end of school, and they fled from the room, and he looked for Jaime so they could take the train together to the city; but Jaime was gone, and he searched for him around the building, calling out his name in all the rooms, and Miss Castillo said, "What is it? Tell me, what have you lost?" He awakened then, to morning and his father standing beside the bed, smiling. "You were talking in your sleep," his father said, his hand warm and gentle on the boy's cheek, as though checking on a fever. "Get up now or you'll be late to school . . ."

During a recess period, one of the sixth-graders pushed him against another boy, who lashed at him instantly, tackling him to the ground. They wrestled, a fist jabbed at his ear, he freed himself, struck back, swung and landed a blow on his opponent's mouth, his weight behind the blow, his knuckles crashing against teeth. Someone pulled him away, while others chanted, "Fight!, Fight!" fiercely crowding around him. It had all happened in a few seconds; and recovering from the suddenness, he saw whom he was fighting, a boy he did not know. He wanted to explain that it was all a mistake, there was no reason to punish each other; but the other boy, crying now, cursing furiously, came at him, leading with his fists. The bell dispersed the little mob, sending them all flying back to their rooms. He had cut his knuckles, and he sucked at them, tasting for the first time the salt of blood, his heart thumping, feeling trapped and outraged, a victim, forced into a fight. He sensed further violence waiting for him, hiding in ambush wherever he

would go, and there was no returning. He could only wait, and fight back, hard, but against his will when he was struck again.

In the noon sun, outside the gate, the boy he had fought stood waiting, stood in his path with three others, their hatred focused on him, like heat through a magnifying lens, burning into his chest. But the tall boy from Grade Six, the one who had pushed him, was suddenly by his side, a protective arm thrown around his shoulder.

"You touch him and I'll break your bones, all four of you," the tall boy said. "Stay away from him, do you hear? Go!" And the four slunk away, glancing back as though to say, just you wait, we'll get you yet, tomorrow, next week, someday.

"Why did you make us fight?"

The boy from Grade Six laughed. He had large crooked teeth and a ripe pimple on his nose. "I must have tripped and you happened to be in the way," he said. "My name's Dado, and you are my friend, yes?"

He did not know what to say. He felt faint and hungry and it was hot standing in the sun.

"You fought well, you know," said Dado. "I like the way you got him on the mouth. I can teach you some other tricks, you know, and they'll never be able to lick you."

They went across the plaza, Dado's hand heavy on his shoulder. He had an impulse to shake off the hand, and run. A certain instinct warned him against Dado's companionship, but at the same time he knew the consequences of his rejection.

"I'm going home," he said.

"Of course," said Dado. "I'll even walk you home if you like. But first, there is something we must settle." He asked with the air of a conspirator: "You have money with you?"

"Why?"

"I asked the question."

"I spent it all this morning."

Dado's hand gripped his arm, tightening. "Don't you lie to me."

"But it's true," he said.

"You owe me fifty centavos," said Dado.

"But I don't owe you anything."

"I'm telling you. It ought to be a peso, but I like you, so we'll make it fifty centavos. That's fair enough, isn't it?"

"But —"

"Bring the money this afternoon. Tell your father it's for a school program. Tell him anything, but bring some money, is that clear?"

He glanced away, at the mountains blue in the glare, the giant boulders of clouds, the trees and the strange town, the confusion and the fear knotted in his chest.

Dado said softly, like a brother, kind and understanding, "Don't look so glum. I'm your friend. I saved you from a beating, didn't I? Look, when you give the money this afternoon, I'll take you to our secret place. It's like a cave. Nobody knows about it, only the members of our gang."

"You're making it all up."

"Ah, you'll like it there, of that I'm sure. The fifty centavos will be your membership fee. You'll be the first to join from Grade Three. Later on, we'll ask all your friends to join."

"There's no such place. I don't believe you."

"I'll be waiting for you this afternoon," said Dado.

His father and mother had finished lunch when he arrived, and he ate hurriedly in the kitchen; and when his mother noticed a bruise on his knee, he said he had stumbled playing in

the schoolyard. He sneaked his coconut shell bank out of the house while his parents were taking their siesta, and broke it with a stone and pocketed five ten-centavo coins and hid the shattered shell in the bushes. If his father would only come down now and ask why he had destroyed the shell, he might tell him . . . The house was quiet in the leafshade, he was alone, and Dado was waiting for him.

"Come with me," said Dado when he handed over the money, catching him abruptly by the wrist. "Come, I'll show you our hiding place," and before he could protest, Dado had dragged him through a break in the hedge and under the school building. . . . Powerless to resist, captured in some tide of force, he half-crawled deeper into the damp gloom, Dado pulling him on, until they came to a hole dug on the ground. There were boys in the pit; some were smoking cigarettes, red dots glowing like demon eyes in the half light; and with the dank rotting smell of sunless earth rose the sharp fume of alcohol. "Go in," said Dado; and when he did not move, crouched on the hard-packed edge of the pit, he was shoved sprawling into a tangle of arms and legs and muted spiteful laughter. He had dropped his books and he could not find them, groping for them in the dark bottom of the pit.

"Meet our new treasurer," said Dado.

"Let me go," he said.

"You stay here," someone said.

"Maybe he wants a drink," said another, laughing.

A bottle was thrust at him, but he would not touch it. The bell began to ring for the start of the afternoon session, and he began to sob, and a hand was clapped roughly on his mouth. His crying stopped presently; and he sat quietly and trembling, his back against the cool wall of earth, the red cigarette eyes

glowing about him. "You tell anyone about this place and we'll kill you," someone said, he could not see who it was; all their faces were vague and featureless in the hidden twilight. He wanted to tell them, please let me go, and I won't ever tell; but no sound came from his throat, he could not speak, like Jaime in the dream; and somewhere beyond the darkness that was the floor above them, the children were singing: "What shall we do when we all go out — all go out — " their voices distant and forlorn. He had one hope left, that Miss Castillo had not called the roll and marked him absent for the afternoon.

THE AUTHORS

Manuel E. Arguilla was born in 1910, in the barrio of Nagrebcan, Bauang, La Union Province, a place he was to write so much about. As one critic has said, "It is one of the most memorably etched barrios in Philippine literature." "How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife" is one of Arguilla's earliest successes. It is the title-story of a collection published in 1940, and which won the Commonwealth Prize. When World War II broke out, Arguilla, then already established as a writer, remarked to a friend: "Life is not worth living without freedom." The news of his arrest by the Kenpeitai in February 1944 did not, therefore, surprise anyone. He was subjected to tortures and a mock trial; it is believed that he died in August 1944.

Even while still a student at Ateneo de Manila University, **Gregorio C. Brillantes** was active as a contributor to Philippine college and national publications, establishing a reputation with the publication of *The Distance to Andromeda and Other Stories* (1960), from which volume "What Shall We Do When We All Go Out" has been singled out as probably the most appropriate selection for this anthology. Brillantes had worked as editor, advertising account executive, and journalist (with Nick Joaquin, in the now defunct *Philippines Free Press*). He is currently the editor of the newly-founded *Manila Review: The Philippine Journal of Literature and the Arts*.

Carlos Bulosan left the Philippines in 1931 as a young man of seventeen and worked in California and in other Pacific Coast states as an itinerant farm hand. In later years, he became a labor leader. A two-year stay at the Los Angeles County Hospital, where he was confined on account of tuberculosis, gave him the opportunity to read seriously and to write. Between 1942 and 1946, he published considerable prose and

verse, the most well-known of his books being *The Laughter of My Father*, a collection of stories (1944) and *America is in the Heart* (1946). He died in 1956; and his letters, published posthumously in 1960, have been collected under the title *Sound of Falling Light: Letters in Exile*.

Amador T. Dagulo was a prolific short story writer, poet, and essayist. A member of the U.P. Writer's Club, he also taught at the University of the Philippines for a number of years. It is unfortunate that his short stories have not been collected in book form. Before his death at the age of 54, in 1966, however, he has had two volumes of poetry published. "Wedding Dance" has been choreographed and performed successfully.

Andres Cristobal Cruz began publishing his short stories in both English and Pilipino in the 'fifties as a member of the young group of writers that keep imaginative work alive at the University of the Philippines through *The Literary Apprentice*. His collections of stories, *Tondo by Two* (1961) and *White Wall* (1964), as well as a novel in Pilipino, *Sa Tondo Man, May Langit Din* (1960), established his reputation.

Roman A. de la Cruz is a native of Kalibo, Aklan Province; he comes from a typical working class family and grew up under difficult circumstances. As a soldier and a guerilla in World War II, he wrote stories about life in the war, publishing these in the Manila magazines. "Alone Along a Lonely Road" was a particularly moving one and is the lead story in a collection which also includes "Three Pieces of Bread" anthologized here. In a note to the collection, published in 1973, N.V.M. Gonzalez especially cited Roman A. de la Cruz's fiction for "its realism and compassion" and invited attention to how the author has "made Panay (island) and its people come to life." De la Cruz edits and publishes today *The Aklan Reporter*, a provincial newsweekly.

A native of Kalibo, Aklan Province, in the Philippines, **J. C. Dionisio** came to the United States at an early age and worked at an unusual variety of jobs before entering a career in journalism and diplomacy. He has managed to write intermittently, however, and kept up his interest in literature. He has been head of the Philippine mission at Islamabad, West Pakistan, for many years, holding the rank of Ambassador.

Gilda Cordero-Fernando took her A.B. and B.S.E. degrees at St. Theresa's College and her M.A. at the Ateneo de Manila. She was born in Manila, the setting of most of her stories. Since her auspicious start in the 'fifties she has won two awards in the annual *Philippines Free Press* contest and two more in the *Palanca Awards for Literature* contest. "People in the War," which has been widely reprinted, comes from her first collection *The Butcher, The Baker, The Candlestick Maker* (1962).

N. V. M. Gonzalez came to the United States as Visiting Associate Professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara but later joined the permanent faculty of California State University, Hayward. At this writing, he is Visiting Professor of Asian American Studies and of English at University of Washington. Besides three novels (*The Winds of April*, *The Bamboo Dancers*, and *A Season of Grace*), he has also published three short story collections. "The Tomato Game," which was written in 1972, is one of Gonzalez' several prize-winning stories.

J. Eddie Infante has possibly worked more in motion pictures than in the writing of fiction, but his command of both media for the depiction of Philippine themes has placed him among the more consistently active ones in both fields. He is the author of the novel *The Final Curtain* (1972).

The son of a former school teacher and a colonel of the Philippine Revolutionary Army, **Nick Joaquin** was born in

1917, in Paco, Manila. He is largely self-taught; having read much in his father's library and distressed by inadequate teachers in high school, he quit during his junior year. A stint at Albert College, in Hong Kong, where he enjoyed a scholarship offered by the Dominicans, ended in his being similarly disenchanted. He eventually found his way into journalism, and for many years, under the by-line Quijano de Manila, wrote extensively for *Philippines Free Press*. His first book, *The Prose and Poems of Nick Joaquin*, which appeared in a limited edition in 1952, includes the novella, "The Woman Who Had Two Navels" and the play "A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino," which are his most known works. He was awarded the title "National Artist" in 1976 by the Republic of the Philippines.

His sustained interest in geography and anthropology has distracted **E. P. Patan ** from journalism, which career he has pursued over the years. In 1972, he published *The Philippines in the World of Southeast Asia*. He has written a number of short stories, of which the latest, "The Bomb" which is here anthologized, is one of his best and, of the stories that have appeared in the early 'seventies one of the finest.

Narciso G. Reyes received his education at the Ateneo de Manila and the University of Santo Tomas. He was among the founding members of the avant-garde group of writers in English called "The Veronicans." After a brief career in journalism following World War II, he joined the Philippine Foreign Service and has since held various ambassadorial posts. He has been the Philippines representative to the United Nations and is presently ambassador to the Peoples Republic of China.

Aida Rivera Ford won the 1954 Hopwood Award at the University of Michigan for her collection of stories, *Now and At the Hour*. She has combined teaching and writing as a career and lives on a farm near Davao City, on Mindanao.

Arturo B. Rotor gained immediate prominence with the publication in 1937 of his first collection of stories, *The Wound and The Scar*. A doctor of medicine, he was among the earliest writers of the Filipino short story in English. During the Pacific War, he served as a member of the Cabinet of the Philippine government-in-exile.

Blivenido N. Santos is the author of several novels (*The Volcano*, *Villa Magdalena*, and *The Praying Man*) and short stories (*You Lovely People* and *The Day the Dancers Came and Other Stories*). His latest position is that of Distinguished Writer-in-Residence, Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas. He was born in Tondo, in 1911, and for many years was President of the University of Nueva Caceres in Naga City, Philippines.

Rogelio R. Sikat is one of the leading writers of the short story in Pilipino and a frequent contributor to the metropolitan and college publications in the national language. "The Prisoner" is an episode excerpted from a novel in progress; the translation is by the author himself and first appeared in *Literature East & West* (Austin, Texas).

With his wife, the prize-winning novelist and short story writer Kerima Polotan, **J. C. Tuvera** has been in the forefront of Philippine writing in English since the 'forties. His career in journalism has been extensive, and as chairman of the editorial board he launched in 1955 the anthology of Philippine Writing in English, *Katha*, under the auspices of the Philippine Writers Association. He is presently a member of the Cabinet of the Republic of the Philippines.